

**Feminist Critiques of Multiculturalism and the Case of South Korea:  
Marriage Migrants, Patriarchy, and Nation-Building**

**BY**

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## **Abstract**

Feminist critiques of multiculturalism have largely focused on group rights by looking at multicultural societies that are based on pluralism. However, in some countries of new immigration, such as South Korea, multiculturalism does not necessarily have a pluralist form, but instead pursues assimilation. Thus South Korea provides an opportunity to explore gendered aspects of multiculturalism in a different context from that upon which the existing feminist critiques are largely based.

What are the gendered aspects of South Korean multiculturalism? In this study I address this question by looking at policies designed particularly for female marriage migrants. I argue that the aim of these policies is to make such migrants contribute to South Korea's multicultural nation-building process through their reproductive, care-giving, and symbolic functions in the idealized Korean family and that patriarchy is reinforced in the implementation of these policies. This reinforcement of patriarchy has resulted in a perpetuation of gender inequality. Looking at the ways in which the South Korean government uses female marriage migrants as instruments in its nation-building process expands the current scope of feminist critiques of multiculturalism.



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## Introduction

The concept of multiculturalism has several interpretations. For example, the term can be used to describe ethnocultural diversity in a society, in a normative sense to shape the way in which diversity should be treated, or as a state policy tool to develop and implement measures in order to “govern” diversity. In this study I primarily discuss multiculturalism as a policy tool at the state level. The origin of this policy-oriented concept can be found in Canada in the late 1960s, where it was first termed “Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework” to accommodate growing Québec nationalism and used to strengthen linguistic duality.<sup>1</sup> In the late 1980s, the concept was developed into a basis for the country’s “Multiculturalism Act.”<sup>2</sup> Since then, the concept has been used as a policy tool in other Western countries, such as Australia, the US, Britain and (arguably) New Zealand. The democratic values, such as human rights, freedom, equality and peace that these countries commonly uphold grounded the introduction of multiculturalism, which aimed to resolve discrimination and injustice suffered by minorities, and to accommodate their needs.

Until this notion of multiculturalism became popular in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, most countries made up of diverse ethnic groups, such as Australia and Canada, commonly upheld hierarchies favoring the dominant culture, and implemented various assimilationist policies which aspired to eliminate “inferior” cultures and construct a monocultural nation. Under that aim, minorities (i.e. immigrants, national minorities, and indigenous peoples)<sup>3</sup> were often marginalized or forced to assimilate to the mainstream culture. Diversity was perceived as a threat to the unity of the nation. With the introduction of multiculturalism, this perception, and these aspirations to establish a monocultural nation, underwent change.

The perception of diversity as threat has not vanished, and has strengthened among some multicultural societies, especially due to the influence of the 9/11 attacks in the United States, and the London bombings of 2005. There has been a growing criticism

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 310.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> In this study, I focus on “immigrants” because my case study of multiculturalism in South Korea was born as a result of an influx of foreign nationals in recent years. The country does not have a sizeable national minority group, or another indigenous population apart from South Koreans themselves.

against, and a retreat from, multiculturalism. European leaders such as David Cameron, Angela Merkel and Nicholas Sarkozy have criticized multiculturalism for undermining national unity.<sup>4</sup> As I will explain more in depth in the following chapter, multiculturalism has also been under attack because “group rights” that are given to minority groups to retain their identities are sometimes viewed as tolerating maltreatment of women within such groups. Some countries, such as Australia, the Netherlands and the UK, have reduced the scale of their multicultural policies in recent years.<sup>5</sup> Overall, the social and political contexts surrounding multiculturalism have changed since the 1990s, when an “uncritical consensus” allowed those who criticized multiculturalism to be viewed as racists or cultural imperialists.<sup>6</sup> However, despite concern over, and partial retreat from, multiculturalism, most Western, democratic countries have maintained a goal of becoming multicultural rather than monocultural (in this study, a monocultural nation means one that is believed to consist of a single, often homogenized, culture, whereas a multicultural nation is one that recognizes and supports the existence of multiple cultures within it). Minorities not forced to assimilate as they were decades earlier, and populations are encouraged to view diversity more positively. This change in the perception of diversity, and the efforts made by governments in its service, is a core characteristic of the implementation of the concept of multiculturalism into practice. Despite pressure, it has proved persistent.

But a consistent trend toward multiculturalism does not dictate uniform policy. Different nations are home to different historical, social and political contexts, and as a result, over the past decades, different types of multiculturalism have emerged. Thus Banting, Johnston, Kymlicka and Soroka are wary of generalizing multiculturalism.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Danny Dorling, “More Division over Multiculturalism,” *The Guardian*, February 9, 2011. It seems the criticism by the leaders was, in part, politically motivated. For instance, in reference to David Cameron’s condemnation of multiculturalism, Dorling argued that, by condemning multiculturalism, the Prime Minister intended to change the direction of anger against his government’s cuts from bankers toward the nation’s Muslim communities.

<sup>5</sup> Christian Joppke, “The Retreat of Multiculturalism in the Liberal State: Theory and Policy,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 55, no. 2 (2004): 243-54.

<sup>6</sup> Anne Phillips, *Multiculturalism without Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 3; Susan Okin, ed., *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Keith Banting et al., “Do Multiculturalism Policies Erode the Welfare State? An Empirical Analysis,” in *Multiculturalism and the Welfare State*, ed. Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 54.



They distinguish different types of multiculturalism based on a nation's policies and classify these policies into three different categories depending on those affected: immigrants, national minorities, or indigenous peoples.<sup>8</sup> According to their empirical analysis, which focuses particularly on policies designed for immigrants, multiculturalism in Australia and Canada is "strong," while in the UK, US and New Zealand it is "modest," and in Denmark, France, Germany and Japan it is "weak."<sup>9</sup> This ranking changes, however, when focused on policies designed for national minorities or indigenous peoples. Thus multiculturalism varies. In fact, because multiculturalism is not an ideology per se, but rather a debating arena for different ideological stances, analysis of multiculturalism will provide a different view of the "right" balance between diversity and unity according to the ideological foundation it is based on (i.e. liberal multiculturalism, pluralist multiculturalism, or cosmopolitan multiculturalism).<sup>10</sup> Thus there is no consensus between (or within) individual countries about how multiculturalism should look either in practice or in theory.

Nevertheless, regardless of their differences, these societies share at least one common purpose in their implementation of multiculturalism: nation-building. As widely argued, a nation is not a natural or pre-extant phenomenon, but rather a socially constructed entity. Benedict Anderson, one of the most prominent scholars in the literature on nationhood, has defined a nation as an "imagined" community.<sup>11</sup> Members of a nation create it by engaging in a shared mental vision of community with other members of the nation. Thus nation-building is an ongoing process of construction of a nation through this imagining. As mentioned at the outset of this thesis, before the introduction of multiculturalism, many nation-building projects were designed to establish a "homogenous" nation. However, as a result of increasing political consciousness about democratic values and growing diversity due to globalization and international migration, some Western countries now focus on constructing a multicultural society in their nation-building.

Yet a multicultural nation is still a nation, and the main goal of multiculturalism is to maintain not merely unity among populations sharing a geographic space, but a

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<sup>8</sup> Banting et al., "Do Multiculturalism Policies Erode the Welfare State?," 58.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Heywood, *Political Ideologies*, 322-6.

<sup>11</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), 6.

national identity. For example, in Great Britain, a national identity based on the notion of “Britishness” has continued to be emphasized under multiculturalism.<sup>12</sup> “Britishness” here stands for a set of values, such as liberty, fairness and enterprise, which ground a British national identity, and which the nation’s citizens are encouraged to believe that they share.<sup>13</sup> Also, some frequently circulated words and phrases in current multicultural societies, such as “integration,” “social cohesion,” and “unity within diversity” all indicate the nation-building purpose of multiculturalism. Favell pays particular attention to the frequent use of the word “integration” under multiculturalism, which he says “points us back towards the old fashioned nation-building paradigm in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to create unified territorial nations out of the patchwork of distinct regions, ethnicities, classes, social divisions.”<sup>14</sup> In his view, the old framework has continued to operate because many “mainstream” academics and policy makers are aware of the heavy price that they will pay if they challenge “the [existing] supremacy of the restorative nation-building frame” in their discussions of multiculturalism.<sup>15</sup>

This suggests that while the concept of multiculturalism may extend the imagined boundaries of the nation by replacing older criteria for membership, such as “race” or shared history and shared ancestors, with “civic values” that allow ethnocultural minorities to be considered part of a nation, it has not demolished the national boundaries themselves. Even under multiculturalism, nations employ a process of exclusion to determine who belongs to the nation and who does not. The creation and maintenance of national boundaries has always been an important part of nation-building projects, and remains in societies that have adopted multiculturalism as a policy tool. In other words, the ultimate aim of multicultural societies is to construct a stronger nation, while taking into consideration the needs and claims of minority groups. Therefore, this study focuses on this core purpose of multiculturalism: the maintenance of the nation in an era of globalization and international migration.

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<sup>12</sup> Tariq Modood, “Multiculturalism and Nation Building Go Hand in Hand,” *The Guardian*, May 23, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Adrian Favell, “Debate on ‘Immigration Policy’: Multicultural Nation-building: ‘Integration’ as Public Philosophy and Research Paradigm in Western Europe,” *Swiss Political Science Review* 7, no. 2 (2001): 120.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 119.

In spite of the centrality of nation-building to multiculturalism as policy, it has not been treated extensively in discussions of multiculturalism. Instead, literature on the topic has been largely occupied with culture, justice and equality (especially ideological and political debates surrounding multicultural group rights) rather than nation and nationalism.<sup>16</sup> The same holds true for feminist critiques of multiculturalism, which have overwhelmingly focused on revealing patriarchy within the cultures of minority groups living in Western societies, and on problematizing multiculturalism in tolerating this existence of patriarchy. For example, Susan Okin, a prominent feminist scholar, argued that multiculturalism can be harmful because it allows minority groups to maintain cultural practices oppressive to women.<sup>17</sup> Other feminist scholars have, at least in part, shared Okin's concern about the danger of cultural relativism under a pluralist form of multiculturalism.<sup>18</sup>

Although I shall also use feminist critiques of multiculturalism, I argue that at present they are applicable only to a limited number of countries where multicultural group rights exist. Most frequently, feminist scholars have problematized such rights in relation to Muslim communities in Western, democratic, pluralist, multicultural countries that have a long history of cultural diversity and sizeable minority groups whose legal and social status enables them to claim such rights. Growth in these minority groups has been facilitated because immigrants are allowed to bring in family members.<sup>19</sup> Since many immigrants arrive as families, their households help

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<sup>16</sup> See the "liberal vs communitarian" debate on multiculturalism; the advocates of the pluralist form of multiculturalism who support granting "group rights" to minorities as a way for restoring equality between majority and minority groups, for example: Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition": An Essay by Charles Taylor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), and Will Kymlicka, "Liberal Complacencies," in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, ed. Susan Okin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); the liberal (feminist) scholars who question the premises of multiculturalism, for example: Brian Barry, *Culture & Equality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001); Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, and Phillips, *Multiculturalism without Culture*.

<sup>17</sup> Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 17-20.

<sup>18</sup> For example: Katha Pollitt, "Whose Culture?" and Saskia Sassen, "Culture beyond Gender," in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, ed. Susan Okin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); Ayelet Shachar, *Multicultural Jurisdictions: Cultural Differences and Women's Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Phillips, *Multiculturalism without Culture*; Sarah Song, *Justice, Gender, and the Politics of Multiculturalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> This family-related immigration has been one of the main legal entry channels in these countries. For example, in the USA, family-related immigration makes up almost two-thirds of the total immigration. In Canada or in Australia, it accounts for between one-third and a quarter of the total immigration. See "World Migration 2008- Chapter 6. Family Migration," *IOM World Migration Report Series 4*, (2008): 151.

them maintain pre-existing cultural identities in the host society. Against this backdrop, the idea of multicultural group rights was born in such societies, and these rights have been at the center of feminist debates on multiculturalism. As my focus is South Korea, such discussions cannot be applied indiscriminately, but must be problematized to address a Korean context.

### ***South Korean Multiculturalism***

Though much of the scholarship to deal with multiculturalism has addressed Western nations, multiculturalism has not only been implemented in the West, but in many East Asian societies that have recently experienced an influx of immigrants, particularly South Korea (henceforth Korea), Japan, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong. High economic growth in these places in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century has been one of the key factors influencing immigration in the region, especially from less wealthy areas of Asia. Unlike neighboring countries that have histories of cultural diversity, the Korean peninsula has had a long history of ethnic homogeneity, and South Korea has only recently begun to experience a significant increase in the number of foreign nationals since the mid-1990s. The number in 2011 reached an official record high: 1,418,149, which makes up almost 3% of the nation's population.<sup>20</sup>

Although this figure may seem insignificant compared to other countries such as Canada (where about 20% of total population are foreign-born in the 2006 Census),<sup>21</sup> the Korean figure is particularly striking when one considers that it represents thirteen-fold growth since 1995.<sup>22</sup> According to research commissioned by the Ministry of Strategy and Finance, the number of foreign residents in Korea could reach seven million (20% of the total population) by 2040.<sup>23</sup> The country's low birth

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<sup>20</sup> Korea Immigration Service, "Current Status of Foreign Residents by Nationality (Third Quarter 2011)," accessed 03 January, 2012, <http://www.immigration.go.kr>; *Seoul Economy*, "Foreign Residents Exceed 1.4 Million ... Close to 3% of Total Population." December 16, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Statistics Canada. "Immigration in Canada: A Portrait of the Foreign-born Population, 2006 Census: Immigration: Driver of Population Growth," accessed January 17, 2012, <http://www12.statcan.ca>.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Eungi Kim, "Increasing Ethnic Diversity in South Korea: An Introductory Essay," *Korea Observer* 41, no. 4 (2010): 497.

<sup>23</sup> Jong-gwan Lee et al., *Report on Quality of Life for Koreans in 2040* (Seoul: Hybrid-Culture Institution, Sungkyunkwan University, 2010), 155.

rate, ageing population, and consequent expected decrease in the number of prime-age workers are likely to force the Korean government to relax its borders further.

Countries new to immigration, like South Korea, often do not have sizeable minority groups that can readily lay claim to rights vis-à-vis the majority. Not only because the history of immigration is recent, but because most foreign residents in these countries arrive without accompanying family members, since these countries rarely allow immigrants to bring them in.<sup>24</sup>

The largest category of foreign residents in Korea is workers, who had reached 600,138 by 2011 (42% of total foreign residents).<sup>25</sup> Among these workers, the vast majority, 552,746 (92%), are non-professionals<sup>26</sup> who arrived in Korea under the Employment Permit System introduced by the Foreign Worker Policy Committee in 2004 to allow employers who struggle to hire local workers to recruit foreigners as an alternative workforce. These employers experience difficulty in finding workers because the jobs they offer are high risk and low status, and are considered by Koreans as “3D” (dirty, dangerous and difficult) jobs. More than half (53%) of foreign workers are from China,<sup>27</sup> while others are from Vietnam (11.1%), the Philippines (5.1%), and Indonesia (4.8%). The next biggest group of foreign residents is made up of marriage migrants, 143,253 in 2011 (10% of total number of foreign residents), the majority of them female (86% of the total number of marriage migrants).<sup>28</sup> Among marriage migrants, the largest proportion (about 43%) are from China,<sup>29</sup> followed by women from Vietnam (29%), Japan (8%), and the Philippines (6%), and several other countries, almost entirely from Asia.

The majority of foreign workers enter as individuals under the Employment Permit System, which does not allow them to bring family members. The system allows workers to obtain a work permit for up to 4 years and 10 months, which prevents

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<sup>24</sup> “World Migration 2008,” 151.

<sup>25</sup> Korea Immigration Service. “Current Status of Foreign Residents based on Employment (Third Quarter 2011),” accessed 04 January, 2012, <http://www.immigration.go.kr>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> The majority of these Chinese workers are Chinese nationals of Korean descent. See Korea Immigration Service. “Current Status of Foreign Workers by Nationality (Third Quarter 2011),” accessed 03 January, 2012, <http://www.immigration.go.kr>.

<sup>28</sup> Korea Immigration Service. “Current Status of Marriage-based Immigrants by Nationality (Third Quarter 2011),” accessed 04 January, 2012, <http://www.immigration.go.kr>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.; 41.5% of female marriage-based immigrants from China are of Korean descent.

them from meeting the requirement of 5 year minimum stay in Korea to be eligible to apply for naturalization.<sup>30</sup> However, marriage migrants are allowed to stay and apply for permanent residency and citizenship as long as they maintain their marital status with a Korean citizen. Additionally, they are allowed to bring dependent children from previous relationships. Although the number of such children has been increasing, official figures are not yet available. By 2011, foreign residents who came to Korea for the purpose of visiting or living with family based on the F-1 Family Visitation visa (43,920) and the F-3 Dependent Family visa (17,214) made up only 4.3% of the total number of foreign residents.<sup>31</sup> The experiences of these migrants differ from those common to countries with histories of immigration. Particularly, the “private” sphere into which they enter does not function as readily as a place for foreign residents to practice and maintain their cultural identities. Therefore, it is not surprising that the concept of multicultural group rights does not yet exist. For this reason many aspects of feminist critiques of multiculturalism prevalent in the West are not applicable in countries new to immigration, like South Korea.

In this thesis, I follow the generalized use of the distinction between the “private” and “public” sphere, the former as a domain concerning personal matters, family and households, and the latter concerning politics, government and state. I use this division since feminist critiques of multiculturalism have been based on such a division. Nevertheless, as some other feminist scholars have argued, I believe this division is patriarchal because it justifies the relegation of women and their roles to the private sphere, as well as obscuring the fact that various private matters related to family are, in fact, public and political.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, while I do use these terms, a critical, feminist view on the division grounds my analysis of the Korean government intervention into the private sphere of female marriage migrants for nation-building purposes, and I will demonstrate that the public and political aspects of the “private” by discussing the importance of such sphere in terms of nation-building (Chapter Four).

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<sup>30</sup> Soe Moe Thu (Producer/Reporter at Migrant World TV, interview by author, July 11, 2011; Korea Tourism Organization, “Korea Visas & Passports,” accessed 26 February, 2012, <http://english.visitkorea.or.kr>; Korea Immigration Service, “Visas & Immigration,” accessed 26 February, 2012, <http://www.immigration.go.kr>.

<sup>31</sup> Korea Immigration Service, “Current Status of Foreign Residents by Visa (Third Quarter 2011),” accessed 04 January, 2012, <http://www.immigration.go.kr>.

<sup>32</sup> Anne Phillips, *Democracy & Difference* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 63, 85-6.

With the increasing number of foreign residents in Korean society, issues of discrimination have risen to the surface. According to the 2007 UN Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in Korea there is “the persistence of widespread societal discrimination against foreigners, including migrant workers and children born from inter-ethnic unions, in *all* areas of life, including employment, marriage, housing, education and interpersonal relationships [emphasis added].”<sup>33</sup> People of Chinese descent (called *hwagyo*)<sup>34</sup> and children of inter-ethnic unions (called *honhyeola*, literally “mixed-blood children”)<sup>35</sup> have been two earlier groups discriminated against because of their ethnic origin: the former since the late Joseon dynasty and the latter since the mid- and late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

With the recent increase in the number of foreign workers and female marriage migrants, issues of discrimination and abuse have been spotlighted. According to Amnesty International, foreign workers have been continuously exposed to discrimination and extremely poor work conditions without receiving adequate protection from the government.<sup>36</sup> A survey from 2011 reports that 78% of foreign workers in Korea have suffered verbal abuse, 26.8% physical abuse, and 13.5% sexual abuse in their workplace, and that 13% receive less than the legal minimum wage.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, many female marriage migrants are also paid less than their Korean counterparts and suffer from long working hours and low, late, or even unpaid

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<sup>33</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “2007 Annual Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,” accessed 23 October, 2011, <http://tb.ohchr.org/>.

<sup>34</sup> In this thesis, I use the government’s revised Romanization system for transliterating Korean words to English. For more information about the people of Chinese descent in Korea, see In-Jin Yoon, “Multicultural Minority Groups and Multicultural Coexistence in Korean Society,” *Korea Observer* 41, no. 4 (2010): 538-42.

<sup>35</sup> For more information, see: Timothy Lim, “Who is Korean? Migration, Immigration, and the Challenge of Multiculturalism in Homogeneous Societies,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, March 16, 2011, <http://japanfocus.org/-Timothy-Lim/3192>.

<sup>36</sup> Amnesty International, “South Korea - Amnesty International Report 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010,” accessed January 04, 2012, <http://www.amnesty.org>.

<sup>37</sup> *Yonhapnews*, “78% of Migrant Workers Face Verbal Abuse,” August 11, 2011. Under the Employment Permit System, workers are not allowed to change their workplace without permission from the Ministry of Justice. This restriction on changing their workplace has made it very difficult for foreign workers to resist unfair treatment and abuses by their Korean employers and has contributed to the abuse of these workers by Korean employers.

wages.<sup>38</sup> As well as facing discrimination in the workplace and general society, female marriage migrants suffer discrimination and abuse in their own households. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Amnesty International have pointed out the existence of discrimination against, and abuses of, female marriage migrants by their Korean family members.<sup>39</sup>

This issue of discrimination against and abuse of female marriage migrants in their own households attracts particular attention from scholars of multiculturalism for two different reasons: first, racial discrimination is usually associated with the public sphere, but abuse of female marriage migrants in their own households requires a rethinking of this association and supports the claim that the private sphere is not always based on intimacy and romance, but also on hierarchical relationships between family members.<sup>40</sup> Secondly, it is this particular issue that has led to the adoption of multiculturalism as a policy tool in Korea. The Korean government agencies have implemented measures under the name of multiculturalism particularly to facilitate the adaptation of marriage migrant women to the Korean family and society.<sup>41</sup> As Soe Moe Thu, a well-known activist for rights of foreign residents in Korea, said in an interview, “female marriage migrants do have difficulties, but they are treated well [by the government] compared to other foreign residents in Korea...they receive special treatment through policy, but foreign workers or refugees live with severe difficulties as a result of the institutional exclusion and discrimination.”<sup>42</sup>

Here it is important to explain the different use of the key official terms “foreigners (*oegugin*),” “overseas Koreans (*jaeodongpo*),” and “immigrants (*iminja*)” by the Ministry of Justice, the central government agency in the implementation of policies affecting foreign nationals in Korea (there is as yet no special government agency in charge of immigration in Korea), and in assigning tasks to other government

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<sup>38</sup> Seo-young Jang et al., “Foundation Research for Development of Employment Support Programs for Female Marriage-based Immigrants,” Ministry of Labor and Korea Employment Information Service, accessed January 7, 2012, <http://keis.or.kr>.

<sup>39</sup> Amnesty International, “South Korea - Amnesty International Report 2008”; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “2007 Annual Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.”

<sup>40</sup> Patricia Collins, “It’s All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation.” *Hypatia* 13, no. 3 (1998): 62-4.

<sup>41</sup> For an distribution of tasks for each agency, see Ministry of Justice, Republic of Korea, “The First Basic Plan regarding Policy for Foreigners, 2008-2012,” accessed January 10, 2012, <http://www.moj.go.kr>.

<sup>42</sup> Soe Moe Thu (Producer/Reporter at Migrant World TV, interview by author, July 11, 2011.



agencies.<sup>43</sup> The Ministry of Justice uses “foreigners” to describe people who are originally from other countries, and have neither Korean citizenship nor Korean blood, but are living in Korea. The ministry categorizes foreign nationals who have a Korean parent or grandparent separately from “foreigners,” and calls them “overseas Koreans.” Lastly, the ministry uses “immigrants” to refer to foreigners or overseas Koreans who have married a Korean citizen, officially called “marriage-based immigrants (*gyeolhoniminja*),” referred to in this thesis as marriage migrants. This categorization is not rigid since individuals can belong to more than one category. For example, many foreign workers and female marriage-based immigrants are also overseas Koreans, mostly Chinese citizens of Korean descent.

The term “multicultural (*damunhwa*)” is often popularly used in relation to all these people, regardless of how they are officially categorized by the Ministry of Justice. However, the ministry and other government agencies primarily reserves the term “multicultural” for female marriage migrants, even though such women make up only about 10% of total foreign residents in Korea.<sup>44</sup> The Support for Multicultural Families Act, which prescribes various policies affecting these women and their families, is the only law that has been enacted under the name of multiculturalism. Korean multiculturalism is not designed to address the needs of those whom the Ministry of Justice defines as foreigners or overseas Koreans. Laws and policies related to foreigners are still framed with the word, “foreign (*oeguk*)” instead of “multicultural.” Neither are ethnic preferential policies for overseas Koreans framed as “multicultural.” Foreigners and overseas Koreans married to Korean citizens are the only ones covered by the legal and official multicultural framework. As I will be arguing in this thesis, through multiculturalism, the government embraces only those whom it terms “immigrants,” but intends to exclude others. This government attitude towards “immigrants” (overwhelmingly female marriage migrants) can be explained by the simple fact that they are the only group of foreign nationals that are allowed to settle down permanently in Korean society. However this simple explanation obscures the fact that the government has a vested interest in female marriage migrants.

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<sup>43</sup> For the use of different terms, see Ministry of Justice, Republic of Korea, “The First Basic Plan regarding Policy for Foreigners, 2008-2012,” accessed January 10, 2012, <http://www.moj.go.kr>.

<sup>44</sup> Hyun Mee Kim, “Multicultural Discourse and Policy in Korean Society” (paper presented at the 2008 Jeju Human Rights Conference, Jeju, June 26-29, 2008).

In this thesis, I mention the name of government agencies only when I first introduce a particular policy or discuss official documents. Apart from these cases, in order to streamline my prose, I simply use “the government” since all agencies of the Korean government are, in fact, committed to constructing a multicultural society even though they may disagree or compete with each other in terms of the details of policies affecting foreign residents.

South Korea makes a particularly interesting case study because of the strong and continuing, though dissipating, belief in ethnic homogeneity among many Koreans. Until recently, Koreans were encouraged to believe that their nation consists of people who share the same bloodline, and were taught to be proud of this ethnic homogeneity.<sup>45</sup> Along with Iceland and Portugal, Korea has been frequently cited as an example of one of the most monoethnic countries in the world.<sup>46</sup> Against this background, Korean multiculturalism has been perceived by the public as involving an attempt to combat ongoing discrimination against foreign residents, which is believed to be a side-effect of the strong belief in ethnic homogeneity.<sup>47</sup> This means that multiculturalism in Korea has been introduced without necessarily embracing pluralism or cultural relativism.

This minimally progressive form of multiculturalism has been strengthened because the Korean government has introduced multiculturalism as a policy tool with a view toward minimizing the impact of ethnocultural diversity on the pre-existing national culture, identity and unity. Although the government has promoted cultural diversity as a positive phenomenon that is a “valuable social resource” in the globalized era,<sup>48</sup> in reality, their policies have reflected aspirations to integrate foreign residents, especially female marriage migrants, into society by assimilating them to Korean culture.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Sang-hun Choe, “South Koreans Struggle with Race,” *The New York Times*, November 2, 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Will Kymlicka, “Multicultural States and Intercultural Citizens,” *Theory and Research in Education* 1, no. 2 (2003): 149.

<sup>47</sup> Hyun Mee Kim, “The State and Migrant Women: Diverging Hopes in the Making of ‘Multicultural Families’ in Contemporary Korea,” *Korea Journal* 47, no. 4 (2007): 103.

<sup>48</sup> Ministry of Justice, Republic of Korea, “The First Basic Plan regarding Policies for Foreigners, 2008-2012, 34.

<sup>49</sup> Geon-Soo Han, “Multicultural Korea: Celebration or Challenge of Multiethnic Shift in Contemporary Korea?” *Korea Journal* 47, no. 4 (2007): 35.

It is necessary to explain my use of “culture” in this thesis. I recognize that culture is complex and vibrant, and also that its definition is contested. Nevertheless, I wish to use the term here in a normative sense to refer to a set of values and practices that determine the appropriate ways of how human activities, especially within (but not limited to) the private sphere, should be carried out among a particular group. Patriarchy, then, lies at the core of “culture,” and serves as a mechanism for power holders to retain control within a given groups under the name of its culture. I frequently use the term “idealized” culture, that is, an essentialized culture based on patriarchal norms and practices, and operating in order to serve the interests of these power holders. As I will argue in this thesis, the influence of this particular use of culture is not limited to the private sphere, but it underpins the public realm due to its importance as a foundation of the nation that is often conceived as a family related by blood.

The reason the nation-building purpose of multiculturalism has been emphasized in Korea is because of a belief that national unity and patriotism are crucial for national development. This belief among Koreans appears based on their experience of achieving high economic and social development in the mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> century when nationalist and patriotic discourses motivated people to work hard for the nation. In a similar fashion, the government often frames constructing a multicultural society without discrimination against foreigners as an important patriotic task for Koreans, so that Korea can become a “world-class,” advanced nation (*seonjingung*), as demonstrated by President Lee Myung-bak’s statement in relation to the incident of a Vietnamese female marriage migrant killed by her Korean husband in 2010: “unless [foreign residents’] tears dry up, Korea cannot become a truly advanced country even though its GDP increases.”<sup>50</sup> Therefore the Korean nation-building project based on multiculturalism seems to be “Janus-faced.”<sup>51</sup> by using multiculturalism, the government intends to retain both national unity based on the traditional national identity, and to ensure national progress.

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<sup>50</sup> KTV (Government Broadcasting Service), “President Lee 44<sup>th</sup> Radio & Internet Speech,” accessed April 10, 2012, <http://www.ktv.go.kr>.

<sup>51</sup> John Hutchinson, “Ethnicity and Modern Nations,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 4 (2000): 651-2.

A correlation becomes clear, then, between the nation-building purpose of multiculturalism and the Korean government's interest in female marriage migrants and subsequent intervention on their behalf. Against this background, I therefore raise a series of questions: 1) to what extent does the Korean government give "preferential"<sup>52</sup> treatment to female marriage migrants in comparison to other categories of foreigners? 2) what is the purpose of such treatment on the part of the government? 3) what implications does my study of the "preferential" treatment of migrant women have for feminist critiques of multiculturalism? I plan to explore these questions by focusing on government laws and policies affecting female marriage migrants (Chapter Four). I will pay particular attention to the nation-wide agencies sponsored by the Ministry of the Gender Equality & Family, called Multicultural Family Support Centers (MFSCs), that are at the core of the implementation of such policies in practice.

In order to expand the scope of feminist critiques of multiculturalism, I will draw on feminist theories of the nation which have problematized the patriarchal construction of nations, and the absence of women in the discourses of nationhood. In bringing women's participation in, and contribution to, nation-building to the surface, feminist scholars have shed light on the roles women play in this process that are undervalued due to patriarchy. In addition, feminist critiques of multiculturalism that have paid attention to the relationship between culture, family (more broadly, the private sphere) and gender present insights relevant to this study. A synthesis of these feminist theories regarding nation, culture, and patriarchy will provide the theoretical framework for this study.

My arguments, in analyzing the government multicultural family policies at the core of Korean multiculturalism, are threefold: first, Korean multiculturalism is structured by the government as part of a nation-building project. Secondly, this nation-building project is carried out based on the notion of patriarchy. Lastly, government policies for female marriage migrants have been implemented in order to encourage these women to contribute to the patriarchal nation-building process through having them

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<sup>52</sup> I describe the government treatment for female marriage migrants as "preferential" because such treatment is only available for these women, not for other categories of foreigners in Korea. However, I argue in Chapter Three and Four that this government treatment is problematic because it results in breaching these women's rights.

symbolize idealized female roles within traditional Korean family and culture, as biological and cultural reproducers of the nation, caregivers for the elderly, and saviors of declining rural communities. This Korean case study contributes to feminist critiques of multiculturalism by demonstrating the ways in which patriarchy works through multiculturalism, not only in the private sphere (as already argued by feminist scholars), but also in the public sphere, due to its employment by the Korean government for the purpose of national-building.

The study that follows comprises four additional chapters. In the first, I identify the main concerns about multiculturalism in feminist literature on the topic. In addition, I look into gendered aspects of multiculturalism in Korea by referring to Korean feminist work on female marriage migrants. This is a relatively short chapter as my intention is to clarify the contribution of my study to the existing literature, however, I will return to this literature in the following chapter to further elicit feminist insights into the patriarchal nature of culture. In the second chapter, I discuss two different groups of feminist theories: those that identify the ways in which women have been mobilized for the purpose of nation-building, and those that highlight the gendered implications of culture. In this chapter, I explain my research design and the methods that I have used. In the third chapter, I apply these two different groups of feminist theories to the Korean situation and address the specific historical, cultural and spatial surroundings in which many female marriage migrants settle. In the fourth chapter, I examine government policies designed for female marriage migrants and their families, and discuss the purposes of these policies. I conclude by discussing the ramifications of my case study for existing feminist critiques of multiculturalism.

## Chapter One: Feminist Critiques of Multiculturalism

As I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, feminist scholars have problematized multicultural group rights and their possible negative impact on women. Feminist literature on multiculturalism has produced significant insights to add to the larger literature on the topic. Mainly by using cases of Muslim immigrant families in Western multicultural societies, feminist scholars have argued that multiculturalism tolerates the weakening of Muslim women's rights by granting multicultural group rights to retain cultural practices that can oppress women. According to these feminists, doing so reinforces unequal power relations between men and women within Muslim families and communities. The feminist lens has made it possible to rethink the common belief that multiculturalism is a liberating and progressive mechanism for *all* members of minority groups and points to the continuing existence of inequality within them.

In order to draw out issues of gender and culture central to feminist literature on multiculturalism, my own study relies heavily on Susan Okin's, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, as the contestation over her arguments are indicative of much of the feminist debate. In the mid-1990s, Okin argued that granting rights to immigrants to retain their cultural identity disregarded the existence of patriarchal aspects of their culture and thus undermined the dignity of women and their universal human rights.<sup>1</sup> Okin stated that it might be better if these cultures "become extinct" so women could integrate into a less patriarchal culture, rather than being conceded rights that allow the continuation of their oppression.<sup>2</sup> Some strongly agreed with Okin, such as Katha Pollitt, who wrote, "I've had a hard time understanding how anyone could find these arguments controversial."<sup>3</sup> Saskia Sassen concurred that in most cultures women are in a disadvantaged position, and thus "group rights" can run counter to improving gender equality.<sup>4</sup> Even Kymlicka, whom Okin describes as "the foremost

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Okin, ed., *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 17-20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 22-3.

<sup>3</sup> Katha Pollitt, "Whose Culture?" in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, ed. Susan Okin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 27.

<sup>4</sup> However, Sassen emphasizes the risk of making "gender" the central issue in multicultural group rights when all members of a minority, not only women and children, but also men feel oppressed by

contemporary defender of cultural group rights,” agreed, in part, with Okin’s arguments and conceded that it is necessary to pay attention to instances of injustice not only between majority and minority groups but also *within* groups.<sup>5</sup>

However, the critique of multiculturalism made by Okin and her followers has also engendered strong responses from feminists of faith. Azizah Y. Al-hibri asserts that Okin’s arguments are based on a conflation of culture and religion, and she criticizes Okin for using the two as if they are interchangeable.<sup>6</sup> Al-hibri has also problematized applying a universalized Western secular feminism view to all women, and argued that Western secular feminists who do so are paradoxically being “patriarchal” towards women of faith and repeating the history of “colonialism, imperialism, or even fascism.”<sup>7</sup> Further, Nurah W. Ammat’ullah argues that some women, who carry out cultural practices described as oppressive by secular feminists, such as wearing the hijab, choose to do so of their own volition based on their beliefs. Ammat’ullah’s argument reflects contradictions within the orthodoxy of feminist critiques of multiculturalism: belief in the liberty of every individual to be treated with dignity potentially ignores women of faith who have chosen to live in a religiously observant way.<sup>8</sup>

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the mainstream. She adds that oppression can be so severe that it strengthens solidarity among men, women and children within minority groups. Thus, rather than rejecting multicultural group rights per se, Sassen proposed to negotiate ways to deal with both intracultural gender inequality and intercultural oppression. See Saskia Sassen, “Culture beyond Gender,” in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, ed. Susan Okin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 77-78.

<sup>5</sup> Will Kymlicka, “Liberal Complacencies,” in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, ed. Susan Okin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 31; Kymlicka clarified his support for multicultural group rights by differentiating two types of cultural rights: the first based on claims of members for rights that could undermine and restrict other members’ rights and liberty, which he opposed, and the second, such as language rights and land claims, directed against the larger society which he firmly defended. Kymlicka later also attempted to refute the liberal egalitarian argument that multicultural group rights undermine individual rights, and argued that such rights actually expand the choice of individuals by promoting equality and removing barriers and contesting stigma that disadvantage minorities. See Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka, ed., *Multiculturalism and the Welfare State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Azizah Y. Al-hibri, “Is Western Patriarchal Feminism Good for Third World/Minority Women?” in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, ed. Susan Okin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 43-5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Nurah W. Ammat’ullah, “Making the Distinction between Faith and Religion: A Challenge to Secular Feminism,” in *Feminism and Multiculturalism: How Do They/We Work Together*, ed. Joyce W. Warren (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), 9-10.

Some feminist scholars have expanded upon Okin's arguments, and have suggested ways to resolve the conflict between cultural rights and gender equality. Shachar believes that it is possible to enhance both justice between majority and minority groups and gender equality for women by recognizing women's plural affiliations to both the state as a citizen and to their in-group.<sup>9</sup> She further suggests that instead of having state-led hierarchical governance, a new legal-institutional system of "joint governance," which recognizes multiple governance agents and shares authority between them, can more flexibly and creatively accommodate cultural groups without compromising the rights of their female members.<sup>10</sup> Anne Phillips has expressed concern about the current trend in which principles of gender equality are used to demonize minority groups and to attack multiculturalism. Phillips does not consider that the issue of gender inequality within minority groups is a sufficient reason to abandon multiculturalism, and proposes a new framework that enables feminism and multiculturalism to work together.<sup>11</sup> As the title of her book *Multiculturalism without Culture* indicates, she suggests keeping multiculturalism, but replacing the current focus on "essentialised and stereotyped cultures" with an emphasis on "individuals."<sup>12</sup> Sarah Song made an important contribution to these feminist efforts of reconciling the conflict by pointing out the fact that many feminist analyses of multiculturalism (most notably that of Okin) are often based on essentialized views of the majority and minority cultures.<sup>13</sup> Song argues that this dichotomization prevents feminist scholars from realizing "interactions" between these cultures and that patriarchy within minority groups is, in fact, often supported by patriarchy within the majority group in the process toward assimilation. Therefore she asserts that realizing the interactive and interdependent characteristics of different cultures, and having intercultural dialogue and deliberation (instead of merely accusing minority cultures of being patriarchal), is necessary to resolve the conflict between cultural rights and gender equality.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ayelet Shachar, *Multicultural Jurisdictions: Cultural Differences and Women's Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 88-9.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Anne Phillips, *Multiculturalism without Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>13</sup> Sarah Song, *Justice, Gender, and the Politics of Multiculturalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 4-8.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



In summation, prominent feminist scholars' critiques of multiculturalism have focused on the possibility of women's rights being undermined, but have tended (relatively) to neglect investigation of the nation-building purpose to multiculturalism, and the gendered implications that nation-building itself may have. Furthermore, the current feminist literature on multiculturalism falters in not taking into consideration the unique aspects of the extensiveness and progressiveness of each society's multiculturalism. Indeed, Okin has admitted that despite difficulty in pinning down a precise definition – as she writes, a multicultural society should be seen as one that claims “that minority cultures...should...be protected through special group rights or privileges.”<sup>15</sup> Thus it seems that the standard feminist critiques of multiculturalism are based on a pluralist form of multiculturalism that intends to accommodate minority cultural groups without inducing or forcing them to change in order to fit better into majority culture(s).

That this style of feminist critique is standard highlights the necessity of my study. Compared to “strong” multicultural societies, such as Australia and Canada, in which these studies are overwhelmingly set, other countries have a more assimilationist form of multiculturalism. In Korea, the pattern of immigrants arriving individually and forming families with local people contributes to assimilation, and the concept of multicultural group rights does not exist. Therefore the feminist critiques discussed above are of limited relevance to Korean multiculturalism. This gap in the existing literature offers an opportunity to expand the feminist understanding of multiculturalism in contexts differing from those that have predominantly been studied so far.

In the process of expanding the scope of feminist literature on multiculturalism, I will draw on existing studies on Korean multiculturalism that take local contexts into consideration. In recent years, the literature on Korean multiculturalism has rapidly expanded. Within a relatively short period of time, the literature has diversified in terms of content and become more sophisticated in applying quantitative, qualitative and comparative approaches.<sup>16</sup> The literature now includes studies that analyze

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<sup>15</sup> Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 10-11.

<sup>16</sup> Timothy Lim, in “Who is Korean? Migration, Immigration, and the Challenge of Multiculturalism in Homogeneous Societies,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, <http://japanfocus.org/-Timothy-Lim/3192> (March 16, 2011), and James S. Frideres and Andrew Eungi Kim, in “A Multicultural Landscape and Multiculturalism of Canada: Implications for Korea,” *Korea Observer* 41, no. 4 (2010):

Korean multiculturalism with a focus, variously, on citizenship, different minority groups, and the role of central and local government in developing and implementing policies related to foreign residents.

Although it has become difficult to pin down the core of literature on Korean multiculturalism, the concept of nation has remained central. Given that Korean multiculturalism at present is not so much about rights of minorities or their claims for multicultural group rights and national belonging, it is not surprising that the literature concentrates on Korea's rapid multicultural transformation as a nation. The focus on nation also arises because the Korean government, the most significant agent driving Korea's move towards multiculturalism, primarily uses the term as part of the discourse of building a "world-class" nation in which the roles of female marriage migrants and their "multicultural families" are emphasized. Here "multicultural family (*damunhwa gajok*)" is an official term for families consisting of a Korean citizen, a marriage migrant (overwhelmingly female) and their offspring, who are termed "multicultural children (*damunhwa janyeo*)."<sup>17</sup>

Since in Korea the current multicultural nation-building project requires assimilation, these women's pre-existing cultural identity is often effaced. Female marriage migrants are encouraged by the government to become idealized Korean wives, mothers and daughters-in-law who are given the important task of maintaining traditional Korean family and culture, as "modernized" Korean women increasingly refuse to perform these roles.<sup>18</sup> Ji-eun Kim argues that these women are required to prove to their Korean family members and the government in their everyday life that they have mastered the skills of being "Korean" in order to be considered a legitimate member of their families, and the nation.<sup>19</sup> Therefore the rights of female marriage migrants largely depend on how well they perform the roles assigned to them.

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677-98, have compared South Korean multiculturalism and multiculturalism with Western democratic societies, such as Australia and Canada.

<sup>17</sup> Hyun Mee Kim, "Multicultural Discourse and Policy in Korean Society" (paper presented at the 2008 Jeju Human Rights Conference, Jeju, June 26-29, 2008), 321-2.

<sup>18</sup> Kyoung-Hee Moon, "Analysis of 'the Crisis of Multiculturalism' in Europe and Korean Multicultural Policies: Focusing on Policies for Female Migrants" (paper presented at the 2011 Association for Korean Studies in Europe Conference, Moscow State University, June 17-20, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Ji-eun Kim, "The Making of "the Korean Wife": The Institutionalization of Marriage Migration in the Cases of Vietnamese Women," *Seoul National University Cross-Cultural Studies* 13, no. 2 (2007): 43.

Kyeong-hee Moon argues that current government policies treat female marriage migrants as “dependent receivers of caring support.”<sup>20</sup> According to Moon, the fact that the government provides female marriage migrants with support and services regardless of their desires or needs indicates that current policies are designed primarily to meet the desires and needs of the government instead. For example, the Korean government has emphasized “unity of society” and the quick adaptations of female marriage migrants and their children to this unity in the Support for Multicultural Families Act.<sup>21</sup> As Moon argues, riots and terrorist attacks carried out in European countries by members of minority groups have influenced Korean government policies on immigrants and their children.<sup>22</sup> Her study indicates that the Korean government, concerned about potential social conflicts, is trying to prevent them through helping immigrants to become integrated and assimilated to Korean society. Indeed, the lack of voice of female marriage migrants has enabled the government to design policies that meet its own purposes.

Furthermore, Hui-Jung Kim argues that the government primarily views female marriage migrants as biological and cultural reproducers of the Korean nation in the midst of the multicultural transformation that surrounds them.<sup>23</sup> According to Kim, in modern history, the Korean state has strategically intervened in the bodies of Korean women at various points through anti-natalist and pro-natalist policies for the purpose of the country’s economic development. In the mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Korean women were encouraged to contribute to the country’s economic development by having no more than two children. Conversely, since 2005, when the country’s total fertility rate reached record lows (only 1.08 children born per woman), far below the replacement rate (2.1), women have been encouraged to have more children to rescue their nation from being overwhelmed by the crisis of a low birth rate and an ageing population. Against this historical background, it can be argued that the government sees not only Korean women, but also female marriage migrants as valuable

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<sup>20</sup> Moon, “Analysis of ‘the Crisis of Multiculturalism’ in Europe and Korean Multicultural Policies: Focusing on Policies for Female Migrants.”

<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Government Legislation, Republic of Korea, “Support for Multicultural Families Act,” accessed January 15, 2012, <http://www.moleg.go.kr>.

<sup>22</sup> Moon, “Analysis of ‘the Crisis of Multiculturalism’ in Europe and Korean Multicultural Policies: Focusing on Policies for Female Migrants.”

<sup>23</sup> Hui-Jung Kim, “Marriage Migration and Changing Gender-Nation Relations in South Korea” (paper presented at the Pacific World in Motion, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, March 13-15, 2008), accessed July 31, 2011, <http://ssc.wisc.edu/sscc/>.

biological reproducers of and for the Korean nation. In addition, Kim argues that female marriage migrants are expected to take on the role of transmitting Korean culture to their children. The assimilationist policies of the Korean government are intended to help female marriage migrants become “Korean” mothers; thereby they can raise their offspring as “Korean.”<sup>24</sup>

However, Kim’s argument neglects the aspects of the government’s multiculturalism that are more ambivalent toward the definition of “Koreanness,” for example their intention to educate the children of marriage migrants as multicultural through cultivating both their bilingual language skills and bicultural background, so that they can become valuable assets for the country. President Lee has emphasized the need to increase national competitiveness by using multicultural children who are considered to have cultural sensitivity for both parents’ countries and speak the languages of both countries fluently.<sup>25</sup> Therefore as long as multicultural children do not cause social problems and do contribute to national development, being multicultural in a more pluralist sense seems not merely tolerated but encouraged by the government in some ways. However, the centrality of nation-building to Korean multiculturalism remains consistent.

In short, the implementation of multicultural policies in some culturally diverse societies has been intertwined with the notion of nation and the reconstruction of the nation under a multicultural framework. Thus it is important for scholars writing on multiculturalism to take account of this nation-building purpose. In particular, feminist analyses on Korean multiculturalism present valuable insights into gendered aspects of multiculturalism by showing how female marriage migrants are primarily viewed and treated by the Korean government as “uniform objects” to meet its nation-building purposes.<sup>26</sup> However, these analyses exist separately from the Western feminist literature on multiculturalism that has been largely based on case studies of Western societies. In this study, by introducing the gendered aspects of multiculturalism in the more assimilationist framework of Korea’s version of a multicultural society, I hope to expand the scope of such literature. In doing so, I also

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<sup>24</sup> Kim, “Marriage Migration and Changing Gender-Nation Relations in South Korea.”

<sup>25</sup> KTV (Government Broadcasting Service), “President Lee 44<sup>th</sup> Radio & Internet Speech,” accessed April 10, 2012, <http://www.ktv.go.kr>.

<sup>26</sup> Hyun Mee Kim, “The State and Migrant Women: Diverging Hopes in the Making of ‘Multicultural Families’ in Contemporary Korea,” *Korea Journal* 47, no. 4 (2007): 105.

hope to contribute to feminist understandings of different types of multiculturalism, and to highlight the core purpose of multiculturalism: nation-building.

## Chapter Two: Gendered Nation and Culture; Research Design

Before I elaborate upon the gendered aspects of multicultural nation-building in Korea, it is necessary to lay out feminist theories of nation and culture. In this chapter, I focus on ways in which patriarchy is embodied within nation and culture and explain the theoretical framework of this thesis.

The term patriarchy, in general, is used to indicate the subordination of women to men, and also the subordination of younger people to older people.<sup>1</sup> This generalized understanding and use of the notion of patriarchy has been criticized by some feminist scholars for ignoring different forms of patriarchy, and for being essentialist and ahistorical.<sup>2</sup> It also ignores the fact that patriarchy can be experienced differently by people (especially women) according to their class and ethnicity. These critiques reveal useful insights into the shortcomings of the generalized use of the notion of patriarchy. However, in this chapter, I do not intend to debate the notion of patriarchy itself, but instead to introduce the way in which nation-building can be gendered, by examining the embodiment of patriarchy in the course of nation-building projects in both monocultural and bi/multicultural nations. Thus this more generalized meaning of patriarchy becomes sufficient and even pragmatic for my immediate purposes.

In Chapters Three and Four, my empirical study of female marriage migrants in the Korean multicultural nation-building project will illustrate a localized and historically contextualized patriarchy. At the end of this chapter, I outline the research design and methods that I have used for that empirical study.

### *Gender & Nation*

Anne McClintock, a prominent feminist scholar, provides a concise description of nations as offering the: “sanctioned institutionalization of gender *differences* [italics in original].”<sup>3</sup> Among feminist scholars who have studied the confluence of gender,

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<sup>1</sup> Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1990), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Anne McClintock, “Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family,” *Feminist Review*, no. 44 (1993): 61.

family, patriarchy, and nation since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, I have been particularly influenced by Nira Yuval-Davis, Floya Anthias, Tamar Mayer, Anne McClintock and Patricia Hill Collins.<sup>4</sup> Yuval-Davis and Anthias enumerate five major ways in which women are implicated within the nation: 1) as biological reproducers of members of national collectivities; 2) as ideological reproducers and cultural carriers of the nation; 3) as markers of the boundaries of national groups (by preventing women from having sexual or marital relationships with men from other groups); 4) as signifiers of national differences; and 5) as active participants in national struggles.<sup>5</sup> The first three major ways in which women are implicated in the nation are particularly relevant to my empirical study, and I therefore expand upon each of them.

The first role of women as biological reproducers is crucial for the very existence of a nation. Obviously without members, the nation cannot exist, let alone survive. Women become responsible for bearing these members. Of course, men are part of the reproductive process too, but as Yuval-Davis points out, in many cases, women (rather than men) have been used and constructed by states as “captive” targets in order to meet the purpose of nation-building and controlling the population.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Yuval-Davis identifies three main discourses in relation to population control: the discourse of “people as power,” furthering national interest through enlarging the population; a Malthusian discourse, encouraging women to have fewer children especially in developing countries (e.g. China’s one child policy); and a eugenicist discourse that considers the “quality” of the population to be more important than “size” and chooses particular groups of women to have more children and others to have fewer.<sup>7</sup> In recent years, this role of women as biological reproducers has been strongly emphasized in some countries, especially in Asia where low birth rates and the consequent ageing of the population have been perceived to threaten the nation, as in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore. Turner argues that this issue of low birth rate and ageing population has led the government of these

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<sup>4</sup> See also Jacqueline Stevens, *Reproducing the State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1999); Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches & Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1986); Joanne Sharp, “Gendering Nationhood: A Feminist Engagement with National Identity,” in *Body Space*, ed. Nancy Duncan (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, ed., *Woman-Nation-State* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 8-10.

<sup>6</sup> Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, 33.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-35.

countries to intervene actively in matters of the private sphere in order to secure a sustainable national population.<sup>8</sup>

Scholars argue that this state use of women as biological reproducers of the nation is problematic, because the government hopes to control women's sexuality and breach the reproductive rights of the individual (to decide whether to have a child, and if so, when and how many) by intervening into the bodies of women with a justification to secure national reproduction, and ultimately the nation per se.<sup>9</sup> In addition, a predestined role for women as biological reproducers has potential to undermine their rights if they fail to produce a child. According to Turner, providing reproductive service (i.e. birth, maintenance and socialization of offspring) is often viewed as the defining characteristic of the responsible citizen in the liberal regime of modern citizenship, particularly in countries that are experiencing a low birth rate and ageing population.<sup>10</sup> Turner's suggestion seems particularly applicable in the case of foreigners (especially female) who marry into one of these nations. In most cases, citizenship is given upon birth (by *jus soli* and/or *jus sanguinis*), but these female foreigners need to *earn* citizenship in their new countries. Providing reproductive service to their adopted country is often a central means for these women to obtain citizenship and thereby enhance their rights. If they fail to bear children, they may experience difficulties in obtaining citizenship.

Women, moreover, are viewed not only as biological reproducers, but also as cultural reproducers of the nation. Even though in some parts of the world, the participation of fathers in parenting has increased, in many others, mothers are still considered the key transmitters of culture to children,<sup>11</sup> for reasons that should be understood in relation to the patriarchal dichotomy regarding gender roles: men perform privileged tasks in the public sphere and women perform undervalued tasks in the private sphere. Cultural education for children is primarily delivered within the private sphere since many core elements of a nation's culture, such as food, dress and language are

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<sup>8</sup> Bryan Turner, "Citizenship, Reproduction and the State: International Marriage and Human Rights," *Citizenship Studies* 12, no. 1 (2008): 47.

<sup>9</sup> Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, 22; Tamar Mayer, ed., *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation* (London: Routledge, 2000), 7.

<sup>10</sup> Turner, "Citizenship, Reproduction and the State: International Marriage and Human Rights," 47.

<sup>11</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, "Ethnicity, Gender Relations and Multiculturalism," in *Race, Identity, and Citizenship*, ed. Rodolfo D. Torres, Louis F. Mirón, and Jonathan Xavier Inda (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1999), 115.



practiced and preserved in domestic space. Thus it is not surprising that responsibility for educating to children falls mainly on women, whose primary responsibility is thought to be in the private sphere, where many cultural activities are carried out. Therefore, women are the nation's "social and biological womb(s)." <sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, women are often seen as symbols of the nation. <sup>13</sup> Women are given the burden of representing the nation, while men are given the burden of protecting this representation. Farwell argues sexually attacking (raping) women's bodies is commonly perceived as an attack on the nation, and a way to humiliate male members of the nation for failing to protect their women, and, ultimately, their nation. <sup>14</sup> In other words, when men embody the nation, they do so as active defenders, and thus they are considered active citizens, but when women embody the nation, they do so as passive symbols or reproducers ("wombs"). This type of gendered division in the roles and responsibility of men and women in the nation-building process is not helpful in improving gender equality since the division restricts women from expanding their involvement in roles that are considered important, and often dominated by men.

In short, feminist scholars have highlighted women's experiences and contributions in the process of nation-building projects, and they have provided insight into how the nation is primarily constructed in patriarchal terms. Here, I need to emphasize that these feminist analyses of the roles of women in the nation-building process suggest that women as well as men are active national agents, but that the female contribution has been devalued due to patriarchal social norms. In the following section, by using these feminist analyses of the embodiment of patriarchy in nation, I examine how patriarchy has been embodied in the Korean nation-building process.

### ***Patriarchal Nation-Building in Korea***

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<sup>12</sup> Mayer, *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*, 10.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 9; McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," 62; Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, 45.

<sup>14</sup> Nancy Farwell, "War Rape: New Conceptualizations and Responses," *Affilia* 19, no. 4 (2004): 395; BBC, "UN Classifies Rape a 'War Tactic'," June 20, 2008.

According to Smith, myths regarding nationhood are crucial in a nation-building project, and in fact “shape” the nation.<sup>15</sup> A gendered ideal of nation is often depicted in such myths, and members of the nation frequently cite such narratives in constituting and perpetuating their nation in their minds and deeds. Korea’s creation myth, *Dangunsinhwa* (the Legend of Dangun),<sup>16</sup> exemplifies the embodiment of patriarchy in the Korean nation. In this well-known tale, Hwanung, the son of the “Lord of Heaven,” comes to earth to make the human world better. A tiger and a bear come to beg him to transform them into humans. Hwanung promises to transform them if they endure the hardship of eating nothing but mugwort and garlic and not seeing the sun for a hundred days. The tiger gives up and runs away, but the bear patiently carries on the task, and finally become a woman. From the union of this woman and Hwanung, a son, Dangun, is born. Although virtually no one takes this story literally, a figure named Dangun is regularly treated as the founder of the first Korean kingdom, *Gojoseon* (BC2333 – BC108), and, more importantly, as the *biological* ancestor of Koreans.<sup>17</sup> In this myth, women originate from an animal and men originate from a savior from Heaven. Hwanung is depicted as a hero who saves the human world (male supremacy and heroism are evident), but the woman is only depicted as a child-bearer. This myth also indicates that patience, endurance, persistence and self-control are crucial qualifications and requirements for women to bear a son, and describes desirable characteristics and roles for women that are central to the nation-building process in Korea.

The dichotomy between roles for men as active defenders of the nation and women as passive reproducers has been especially visible in the nation-building process since Korea’s independence from Japanese Occupation (1910-1945). It seems that the brutal history of being colonized by the Japanese, the division of the peninsula, and the on-going military tension between North and South since the Korean War (1950-1953, the fighting was largely confined to this period, the war itself has never

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<sup>15</sup> Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 201; Mayer, ed., *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> *Korea Herald*, “The Dangun Legend for Children,” September 2, 2011; Seungsook Moon, “Begetting the Nation: The Androcentric Discourse of National History and Tradition in South Korea.” in *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*, ed. Elaine Kim and Chungmoo Choi (London: Routledge, 1998), 41-2.

<sup>17</sup> Kyung-Koo Han, “The Archaeology of the Ethnically Homogeneous Nation-State and Multiculturalism in Korea,” *Korea Journal* 47, no. 4 (2007): 13-5.

officially ended) have strengthened the roles of men as active defenders of the nation.<sup>18</sup> The image of women as exclusively passive reproducers of the nation has been reflected in anti-natal or pro-natal policies, which have been used by the Korean government depending on perceived needs at specific times in order to mobilize women to contribute to the country's development.<sup>19</sup>

From this, it is evident that Korean women's bodies are consistently used by the government as instruments for nation-building. For example, during the mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> century after the Korean War and under the military dictatorship, more than one million poor Korean women in US military camptowns (*gijichon*) were expected by the Korean government to perform as "sex ambassadors" for the purpose of improving diplomatic ties with the US for national security and economic growth through selling sex to US soldiers.<sup>20</sup> A group of ex-prostitutes from these camptowns have claimed that although the government did not use coercive means, it encouraged them to sell sex by providing them with basic English and etiquette classes, and by praising them as "dollar-earning patriots."<sup>21</sup> The Ministry of Gender Equality & Family has declined to confirm these women's claims, but it is widely recognized that the government has tolerated prostitution around US bases although it is illegal in Korea. In addition, transcripts of parliamentary hearings from the 1960s support these women's claims that some law makers viewed prostitution as a way of earning dollars, and urged the government to supply prostitutes for US soldiers, and the then deputy home minister responded that the government had improved the supply of prostitutes around US bases.<sup>22</sup>

Korean and American soldiers who fought against a mutual Communist enemy in the early 1950s and have defended South Korea since then, have been remembered and frequently praised in ceremonies and events, however these women's contributions,

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<sup>18</sup> Sheila Miyoshi Jager, *Narratives of Nation Building in Korea: A Genealogy of Patriotism* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 120-4.

<sup>19</sup> Hui-Jung Kim, "Marriage Migration and Changing Gender-Nation Relations in South Korea" (paper presented at the Pacific World in Motion, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, March 13-15, 2008), accessed July 31, 2011, <http://ssc.wisc.edu/sscc/>.

<sup>20</sup> Katharine Hyung-Sun Moon, "Stars and Stripes and Sex: Nationalism and Globalization in the Kijich'on," in *Women's History in Modern Korea*, Seoul National University, 2004, 2. Available from <http://www.wellesley.edu/Polisci/KMoon/women.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Sang-hun Choe, "Ex-Prostitutes Say South Korea and U.S. Enabled Sex Trade Near Bases," *New York Times*, January 08, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

and their hardships in enduring violence and injustice, have been considered by the public, and government, as unimportant and even shameful in patriarchal Neo-Confucian Korean society.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, these Korean women were not only viewed as instruments by the government for a national purpose, but they have regularly been perceived by many Koreans as being “tainted” symbols of the nation.<sup>24</sup> Mixed-blood children who were born between these Korean women and American soldiers have been discriminated against in Korean society, in part because they have a mother who “sold her body” to US soldiers.<sup>25</sup> Such children are seen as a reminder of the Korean women who were considered to have put Korean men to “shame” and “betray[ed]” their nation by having sex with a US soldier.<sup>26</sup> This perception is a clear example of Korean women’s bodies as symbols of the nation, in this instance a nation that had been occupied by the US imperial power. Their representation, rather than serving the needs and experiences of the women in question, serves instead as a shameful reminder for Korean men in their failure of protecting (or taking control of) women’s bodies, and thus the nation.

In addition, women in Korea are expected to function as cultural reproducers of the nation. In spite of increasing awareness of gender equality, the predestined role of women as mothers remains strongly emphasized. In fact, mothers continue to be in charge of most chores involved in raising children regardless of whether they have a job outside the home or not.<sup>27</sup> An ongoing emphasis on domestic labor was underscored in 2009, when the Bank of Korea decided to choose Shin Saimdang as the first woman to appear on a Korean banknote. Shin Saimdang (1504-1551) is well-known not only for being a great artist, but also for symbolizing the ideal Korean mother in raising her son Yulgok, one of Korea’s greatest Confucian scholars. When the bank announced its decision, a few feminists denounced it, stating that choosing

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<sup>23</sup> Moon, “Stars and Stripes and Sex: Nationalism and Globalization in the Kijich’on,” 2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.; Choe, “Ex-Prostitutes Say South Korea and U.S. Enabled Sex Trade Near Bases”; Mary Lee, “Mixed Race Peoples in the Korean National Imaginary and Family,” *Korean Studies* 32, (2009): 67.

<sup>25</sup> The issue of discrimination against these children is result of an intersection of various factors; in addition to the fact that their mothers “sold their bodies” (and betrayed the nation) to US soldiers, race and class influence their treatment too. These mixed-blood children have been considered abnormal in the highly homogenous society, and many of their families have low socioeconomic status.

<sup>26</sup> Lee, “Mixed Race Peoples in the Korean National Imaginary and Family,” 67.

<sup>27</sup> Jong-yeol Yoon, “In 74% of Double Income Family ‘Wives Take the Full Charge of Childcare and Housework’,” *Seoul Economy*, January 09, 2012.

Shin Saimdang stereotyped women as mothers, and glorified Confucian patriarchy.<sup>28</sup> In addition, these feminists also argued that choosing Shin Saimdang, who succeeded in both in her profession and in performing the traditional functions of women in the private sphere, the bank was implicitly justifying women's self-sacrifice, especially the "double-shift" of work that many women are forced to take on.<sup>29</sup> These feminists urged the Bank of Korea to choose another woman, such as Ryu Gwan-Sun, who is well known for fighting for the country's independence during the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement against Japanese colonial rule,<sup>30</sup> but their criticisms went largely unheard, due to public lack of awareness and/or interest in the gendered implications of choosing Shin Saimdang as a representative figure for Korean women.

To sum up, in the nation-building process, Korean women are symbolic figures who are expected to stay in the private sphere, protected by men, and to take on roles associated with activities that occur in this sphere (i.e. as biological and cultural reproducers of the nation). By limiting women's roles thusly, women are relegated to the position of secondary citizens of the nation. In this way, the Korean nation-building has been essentially *patriarchal*. Although the necessity of reproduction for nation-building makes it a political act, patriarchy consigns reproduction and family to the private sphere, thereby labeling them as less important.

Consequently, that the feminist analyses discussed in the beginning of this chapter made a ground-breaking contribution to the literature of nationhood is both evident and understandable. Feminist analyses focus on the particular ways in which patriarchy determines different roles for men and women, and the relegation of women to a secondary position in national citizenship as a result. However, these feminist analyses of nationhood disregard the embodiment of patriarchy within culture, which is a fundamental element to nation-building. The feminist scholars of multiculturalism whom I introduced in the previous chapter provide insights into the patriarchal nature of cultures; thus their views on the relation between gender and culture bridge the gap exists in the feminist literature on nationhood.

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<sup>28</sup> Yoo-kyeong Jeong, "New Banknote Prime Figure Shin Saimdang... Feminists Oppose," *The Hankyoreh*, October 2, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

## *Gender & Culture*

A sense of having shared culture (often a homogenized and idealized culture) among members of a nation is a key element for the existence and unity of the nation, as Anderson argues. Culture enables the members of a nation to identify themselves collectively. In other words, it grounds nationalism. This collective identity based on shared culture is so important that Gellner has even famously said “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.”<sup>31</sup> In the previous sections of this chapter, I argued that nations are patriarchal by examining ways in which nation-building is carried out based on patriarchal norms and practices. In this section, I am going to flesh out the framework I have established in that argument by considering culture as a fundamental element of nation, and discussing the patriarchal aspects of culture.

In her critique of the granting of multicultural group rights to minority groups, Okin has problematized the acceptance of cultures that embody patriarchy within them. While Okin’s work tends to problematic generalization, her supposition that “most” cultures are patriarchal, and therefore “antifeminist” and oppressive for women, is relevant to my work here.<sup>32</sup> As Okin argues, the relationship between patriarchy and culture exists because men, who have more social and physical power, have had the authority to determine how cultures are articulated and constructed, and also because culture has been used by men to facilitate their control over women.<sup>33</sup> Controversial customs oppressive to women, such as types of violence related to “honor” (including honor killings, victims of rape being forced to marry their rapist in order to protect family honor), female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and polygamy are often described as “cultural” practices. These practices control women and favor men’s interests. Of course, patriarchal cultural practices do not have to be as extreme as the above examples. Restricting women to performing their roles as wives and mothers at home can also be considered patriarchal, and thus oppressive.

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<sup>31</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 169.

<sup>32</sup> Susan Okin, ed., *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 12.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, 16.

Furthermore, feminist scholars in writing on the relationship of multiculturalism to the private sphere have provided insight. In particular, feminist scholars have scrutinized the ways in which the private sphere can function as a haven for immigrant families in Western societies to deliver culturally endorsed practices that are often oppressive to women.<sup>34</sup> In recent decades, awareness of gender inequality has increased in many countries, and policy measures have been implemented to improve the situation in the public sphere. However, because the private sphere is often assumed to be based on romantic and intimate relationships, or because gender inequality within this sphere is considered a private issue not subject to public intervention, it has, in general, received less attention. These stereotypical perceptions have contributed to the survival of patriarchy in the private sphere. Collins argues that, contrary to the conventional belief in that the private sphere is based on romantic and other affective bonds, it is, in fact, constructed around hierarchical relationships among family members, most notably between husbands and wives.<sup>35</sup> Family is particularly important in relation to the nation and gender because family is often thought as “natural” and such hierarchies become naturalized in turn. Individuals internalize naturalized hierarchical relationships from the private sphere, and this contributes to the assumption that men and women should occupy those same hierarchical positions within the nation.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, McClintock argues that nations embody the “iconography of familial and domestic space.”<sup>37</sup> McClintock’s argument is clearly demonstrated in my previous discussion of normative Korean gender roles.

To sum up, patriarchy is embedded in both culture and nation. Culture, which in the context of my thesis a set of ideas, values and practices that have been created within a patriarchal system, grounds a nation-building process. The patriarchy within culture and nation is constructed and naturalized in the private sphere, propagated through family relationships, and is expanded as people interact with each other outside the private sphere based upon patriarchal norms that they have learnt within it. In this sense, a nation is a naturalized and legitimized system of patriarchy. Using this synthesis of patriarchy and nation, gender norms and culture, I will examine the use

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<sup>34</sup> Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 23.

<sup>35</sup> Patricia Collins, “It’s All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation.” *Hypatia* 13, no. 3 (1998): 64.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> McClintock, “Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family,” 63.

of female marriage migrants by the Korean government as central means for its patriarchal nation-building project, within a multicultural framework.

### ***Research Design***

Analyzing the nation-building purpose that underlies the Korean government's multicultural family policies is at the core of this study, and it is appropriate to here lay out the methods I have used to gather this information, which I shall then interpret through the feminist framework that I outlined immediately above.

I collected necessary data for analysis from both primary and secondary sources, by referring to existing literature and government official documents, and by conducting interviews with stakeholders. I have analyzed the purposes of government policies largely based on primary sources rather than secondary sources, and referred to literature on Korean multiculturalism mainly to understand the different ways in which government policies for female marriage migrants and their multicultural families have been analyzed. I have borrowed some of their ideas to support my arguments, but I have tried to develop my analysis based on primary sources. Two reasons for using primary sources are to deliver a clear description of the policies themselves, and also to obtain up-to-date information that existing studies do not cover. The key sources I refer to are official government documents and pronouncements, research reports commissioned by the government, and media and NGO reports written in response to government policies.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, merely looking into documents was insufficient for understanding delivery of the policies in practice, such as routes of delivery, and the attitudes of people who handle the policies. I therefore conducted interviews with stakeholders during field research.<sup>39</sup> I selected two different groups of interviewees in order to canvas a range of perspectives on government policies. Particularly, social workers

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<sup>38</sup> As the Korean government has digitalized and published most of its policies and relevant documents online, I obtained most of this material via the internet. Some other material, I obtained directly from stakeholders in MFSCs and NGOs during my field research in Korea.

<sup>39</sup> Before organizing interviews, I obtained approval from the Human Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Wellington. In order to fulfill the conditions of ethical approval, I asked interviewees to read an information form that outlines the purpose and content of my research and sign a consent form, agreeing to participate.



from Multicultural Family Support Centers (henceforth MFSCs), who are hired by the government and working according to the government guidelines, and independent NGO workers who work for female marriage migrants or other foreign residents.

As most of the MFSC programs and services are designed by the central government, and the MFSCs around the country are similar in their programs and services, I limited my research area to South Gyeongsang Province. Choosing this area was useful to my work because it has MFSCs in both urban and rural areas and this dual placement enabled me to take into consideration the different socioeconomic conditions of the two environments. Likewise, I conducted interviews with NGO workers based in this same region. In addition, I interviewed two NGO workers based in the capital region of Seoul. In total, I visited three MFSCs and interviewed five MFSC workers and six NGO workers. What I observed and heard, especially in my visits to MFSCs and NGO offices, is reflected in my analysis.

Overall the interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix 1 and 2 for lists of interviewees and interview questions). I had specific questions about interviewees' opinions regarding government policies. However, during the interview process, other questions arose naturally. After the interviews, I transcribed them in Korean. I sent transcripts to those quoted in this study. Feedback has been given as a summary or a full draft of this thesis either in English or Korean (or both) depending on the interviewee's wishes.

In order to fully explore my case study, I also employ qualitative methods, thematic analysis and discourse analysis, because of the descriptive and conceptual nature of the questions that I raise. As I discussed in my introduction, I am concerned with asking and answering three particular questions: 1) to what extent does the Korean government give more preferential treatment to female marriage migrants than other categories of foreigners?; 2) what is the purpose of such treatment on the part of the government?; and finally, 3) what implications does my study on the preferential treatment of migrant women have for feminist critiques of multiculturalism? I use thematic analysis in categorizing my data into these different themes, and discourse analysis in deconstructing government policies to reveal the motivations and beliefs that underlie them. I further categorize the data in relation to the main social issues that the country has faced in recent years, such as issues of discrimination against and

abuse of foreign residents, weakening of family loyalty and traditional culture, rural depopulation and decline, and the low birth rate and ageing of society. One aspect that all these issues share is their profound influence upon nation-building.

Additionally, I employ qualitative analysis to examine multicultural policy for both its explicit and implicit purposes. The explicit purpose is that acknowledged by the government: to facilitate the adaptation of female marriage migrants into Korean family and society, to stabilize multicultural families, and to increase national competitiveness in the global arena. The implicit purpose is not laid out in the policies but is argued by scholars and stakeholders. One of the most prominent arguments is that the implicit purpose of multicultural policy is to mobilize female marriage migrants in increasing the national birth rate, and raising their children as capable members of the Korean nation. In the following pages, I will investigate this claim, and I will deconstruct the government's views on and attitudes towards female marriage migrants and social issues. In the course of doing so, I reveal connections between social issues and multicultural policy, and re-interpret the purposes of those policies in relation to nation-building. In short, by using qualitative data and methods, I investigate the purpose and motivations of Korean government policies designed for female marriage migrants and their multicultural families.

I have referred to material written in both Korean and English in this thesis, and translated some Korean material into English. All Korean government official documents are originally written in Korean, but the government provides English translation for some documents. However, I have mainly referred to the original Korean documents, and translated them as literally as possible at the cost of creating, in some parts, rather unnatural English. I did so because I found that some government translations distort the original meaning and intention of the policies. More importantly, English translations of documents are not official, and thus lack legal status. In the bibliography I provide an English translation for the details of all Korean references that I have used in this study.

Finally, it is necessary to acknowledge my positionality as a researcher in this project. Ackerly and True argue that in "feminist-informed" research, it is important and

ethical to be attentive to one's own situatedness as a researcher.<sup>40</sup> This is because each researcher has different epistemology and belief systems, which inevitably play an important role in all phases of their research. I was born and grew up in South Korea, where I lived under patriarchal family and cultural norms and systems. However, for the past decade, I have lived in other countries, including the UK, Mexico and New Zealand. My experience of living as an immigrant in a foreign country has boosted my interest in multiculturalism, and enabled me to think critically about its meaning and its different manifestations. In addition, my time living outside of Korea has also enabled me to think more clearly about Korea's nationalism and patriarchal family and social structure.

I came to live in New Zealand in 2009, and have lived in the country since then. My purpose of moving to New Zealand was mainly because of my relationship with a New Zealander whom I met in Mexico. Even though I am not married to him, I share some similarities with female marriage migrants in Korea who entered Korea based on their relationship with a Korean man. Throughout this project, my experience of entering a New Zealand family and society has influenced my analysis of the Korean government's multicultural family policies. My position predisposes me to discuss the experiences of female marriage migrants and their views on multicultural family policies. However, I have decided not to include their experiences, but to focus instead on analyzing the ways in which the Korean government mobilizes these women for the purpose of nation-building. I am conscious of this decision as a potential limitation, and take responsibility for any shortcomings.

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<sup>40</sup> Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True, *Doing Feminist Research In Political & Social Science* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 21-39.

### **Chapter Three: The South Korean Context**

This chapter outlines the Korean context in which many female marriage migrants are situated. Korean society, in general, has been shaped by Neo-Confucianism, which upholds patriarchy as central to both family and society. However, recently, Korea has experienced significant changes, as a result of industrialization, modernization and globalization, which have weakened this patriarchal pillar as a result. These changes include a weakening of family ties and fidelity to traditional roles, especially reproductive and caregiving roles, a low birth rate and an ageing population, rural depopulation and decline, and the erosion of traditional Korean culture in general. Often these changes are framed by political leaders, and seen by many Koreans, as a “crisis” that threatens the nation.<sup>1</sup>

Knowledge of not only these current historical and cultural contexts but also of the specific living environments of female marriage migrants is crucial for an understanding of the government mobilization of these women through multicultural family policies (Chapter Four). Of particular relevance is the usually lower socioeconomic status of the families of female marriage migrants and the strong presence of patriarchy within the families. Such environments facilitate government mobilization of female marriage migrants by providing a justification for government intervention into the private sphere.

#### ***Historical and Cultural Context***

As mentioned above, since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Korea has experienced significant social change as a consequence of the ongoing industrialization, modernization and globalization of the nation. Discourses of family “crisis” have been formulated as a

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, KTV (Government Broadcasting Service), “President Lee 14<sup>th</sup> Radio & Internet Speech,” accessed April 10, 2012, <http://www.ktv.go.kr>; Presidential Archives, “President Rho Moo-hyun’s Letter to Citizens on the Occasion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of His Inauguration,” accessed May 25, 2012, <http://pa.go.kr>.

result of changes to the Korean family.<sup>2</sup> The total number of divorce cases in the country increased roughly ten-fold between 1970 (11,615) and 2010 (116,858) while the total population grew only 1.5 times during the same years.<sup>3</sup> The proportion of unmarried individuals between 25 and 29 has increased significantly, rising from 18% and 50% for women and men respectively in 1985 to 59% and 81% for men in 2005.<sup>4</sup> The average age of first marriage has likewise increased.<sup>5</sup> The increasing proportion of unmarried individuals, along with the older average age for first marriage, directly impacts the Korean birth rate. In general, the fertility window for women narrows as they age, and the social stigma regarding cohabitation between unmarried couples, and out-of-wedlock births, has remained largely intact.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, South Korea has one of the lowest birth rates in the world. According to the 2011 World Factbook, the total fertility rate of the country is 1.23 children born per woman, which ranked South Korea 217<sup>th</sup> among 222 countries.<sup>7</sup> Korea's fertility rate rebounded somewhat between 2005 and 2010, compared to its record low in 2005, due to the increasing entry of foreign brides in the mid-2000s (Chapter Four); however, it still remains well below replacement rate. Due to the country's low fertility rates, discourses of the family's crisis in performing its reproductive function have become pronounced.

Furthermore, low fertility rates and increasing life expectancy as a result of the development of health technology have brought about the problem of an ageing population. The proportion of those aged over 65 is expected to increase to 38.2% of Korea's total population by 2050, a pace of societal ageing that some have noted is the fastest in the world.<sup>8</sup> These demographic changes are expected to bring significant consequences, such as a decrease in working age population, and a worsening of the ratio between the dependent and productive part of the population. Any of this may

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<sup>2</sup> Hye-yeong Kim, "The Characteristics of the Korean Family and the Main Issues of Family Policy," *Gender Review*, no. 17 (2010): 20.

<sup>3</sup> Korean Statistical Information Service, "Statistics by Themes; Marriage & Divorce," accessed May 11, 2012, <http://kosis.kr>.

<sup>4</sup> Kim, "The Characteristics of the Korean Family and the Main Issues of Family Policy," 21.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. It was 21.5 years for women in 1960, and increased to 28.7 years in 2009 (31.6 years for men).

<sup>6</sup> Yeong-cheol Kim, "Possible Responses to the Falling Marriage Rate and the Extremely Low Birth Rate," *Korea Development Institute Focus*, no. 11 (2011), available at <http://www.kdi.re.kr> (accessed May 26, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook," accessed November 19, 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/index.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Government of the Republic of Korea, "The 1<sup>st</sup> Plan for Ageing Society and Population (2006-2010)," accessed April 26, 2012, <http://momplus.mw.go.kr>, 13.

trigger social conflict between people of different generations, and increase pressure on the government to provide the elderly with pensions and caregiving services.<sup>9</sup>

That the caregiving function of family, which is normally performed by female family members, is weakening has made the problem of ageing population even more urgent. In general, the world over, women are more likely than men to take on the role of caregiver, and Korean women are no exception. They are not only in charge of looking after their husband and children, but also their parents and parents-in-law. Traditionally, there is a strong expectation that married women serve their parents-in-law faithfully. Disobeying parents-in-law was even considered to be one of the seven evils that dishonor women in Confucianism.<sup>10</sup> However, with an increasing number of elderly Koreans living in households of one or two people, the tradition has weakened. As of 2005, 32% of the elderly population over 65 lived alone, and 34% lived with their spouse or other relatives.<sup>11</sup> These rates are much higher than they were in 1990, when only 8% of the elderly population lived by themselves, and 16% lived only with their spouse or relatives; the majority lived with children and grandchildren.<sup>12</sup>

The rapid increase of the elderly population, together with the fact that family ties are weakening, has increased public dependency upon the government provision of caregiving services. This has put considerable pressure on the Korean government. Particularly, after experiencing the severe economic crises of the late 1990s, and more recently of the late 2000s, public demand for a better welfare system has amplified, so much so that during the election of members to the National Assembly in 2012, even the conservative New Frontier Party (*Saenuri-dang*) had to pledge additional spending of \$79 billion to expand welfare services.<sup>13</sup> In a similar fashion, to respond to increasing public demand in 2003, the twin issues of low birth rate and ageing population were selected as one of the government's top agenda items. In 2005, the

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<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Ik Ki Kim, "Policy Responses to Low Fertility and Population Ageing in Korea," United Nations Secretariat, accessed November 19, 2011, <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/popdecline/kim.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Chern-Nee Chua, "Women's Self-sacrifice," *Korea Times*, February 27, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Statistics Korea, "Generational Composition of Family and Household Types of Senior Citizens Including Those Who Live Alone," accessed May 26, 2012, <http://www.index.go.kr>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> John Power, "Has Populism Taken over Politics?" *The Korea Herald*, April 9, 2012.

Presidential Committee on Low Fertility and Ageing Society was formed.<sup>14</sup> The Presidential Committee has developed policy measures to increase the country's birth rate through creating a "family-friendly" social environment. These measures include improving childcare facilities and encouraging people to take maternity leave, providing married couples with support for housing loans and childcare allowances, and giving tax incentives to families with multiple children.<sup>15</sup> The government has also made efforts to provide the elderly with employment opportunities, and to strengthen the income support system for them.<sup>16</sup> Overall, between 1990 and 2007, the government increased its welfare policy spending by 11% (on average) per year, taking the risk of worsening its debt-to-GDP ratio.<sup>17</sup>

However, according to the OECD secretary general Angel Gurría, "Korea is not in a position to embark on outright welfare policies" because of its increasing debt.<sup>18</sup> Gurría warns that the 11% annual increase in spending welfare policies is the highest among OECD countries, and emphasizes that the Korean government needs to be careful in this area specifically because of the country's ageing population, which alone could elevate social spending to 20% of GDP by 2050.<sup>19</sup> Thus the government has faced a series of challenges: to alleviate the negative socioeconomic impacts caused by the low birth rate and ageing population; to meet the public needs for welfare services; and to balance its social spending on these services with the country's lower rate of economic growth.

As a way to overcome these challenges, the government has attempted to restore weakened family values. The current administration has emphasized the restoration of traditional norms of loyalty. President Lee urged the nation to reinstate the Korean extended family system that differs from a "Western nuclear family," praising the former by saying "the world [will] become more peaceful if the West learns from our

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<sup>14</sup> National Archives of Korea, "Policies for Low Fertility and Ageing Society," accessed April 26, 2012, <http://contents.archives.go.kr>.

<sup>15</sup> Government of the Republic of Korea, "The 1<sup>st</sup> Plan for Ageing Society and Population (2006-2010)," 13.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> *MK Business News*, "Korea's Social Spending Fastest Rising in OECD ... 'Cautious Approach to Welfare'," April 26, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Hyon-hee Shin, "Korea Aims for Debt below 30% of GDP," *The Korea Herald*, April 29, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.; *MK Business News*, "Korea's Social Spending Fastest Rising in OECD ... 'Cautious Approach to Welfare'."

family system.”<sup>20</sup> He also instituted a system of awards for people who have done their filial duty to parents (-in-law) in very difficult situations. Many of these prize-winners were “good” daughters-in-law who had served their parents-in-law with devotion.<sup>21</sup> Here, the President’s definition of “the Korean family system” is one that maintains harmony through hierarchical relationships based on patriarchal norms. Restoring the idealized traditional family in order to overcome the family crisis seems a culturally appropriate approach, and also reduces the government’s burden in providing welfare services. However, the breakdown of traditional systems, and governmental attempts to reconstitute them should not only be considered in relation to their impact upon social functions. It is also necessary to discuss the erosion of “idealized” Korean culture, and its implications in terms of nation-building.

The details of idealized Korean culture are contested depending on the different values of classes they stem from, upper class (*yangban*) or middle and lower class (*minjung*). Nevertheless, in both cases, the idealized Korean culture is largely based on Neo-Confucianism, the ruling ideology of the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910).<sup>22</sup> Since its introduction, Neo-Confucianism, which emphasizes loyalty, filial piety, ethical morality, benevolence, humanity, faithfulness and spiritual self-cultivation, as well as maintaining harmony within family, community, and state based on hierarchical relationships (between wife and husband, parents and children, young and elders, king and subject), has remained a fundamental part of Korean culture and nation.<sup>23</sup> Neo-Confucianism has influenced Korea’s moral norms, its way of life, its social relations, and even the legal system of the nation.

Idealized, Neo-Confucian Korean culture is deeply embedded in South Korean national identity precisely because the government has used this culture to foster a sense of national identity following the country’s liberation from the Japanese occupation and subsequent division of the peninsula in 1945. According to Yim, the

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<sup>20</sup> *Yonhapnews*, “President Lee ‘We Should Restore the Family System’,” May 08, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Seong-won Yoon, “Filial Duty Virus, 76-year-old Grandmother Cares for Her 100-year-old Mother-in-law,” *AsiaToday*, May 08, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Kyoung Ja Hyun, “Sociocultural Change and Traditional Values: Confucian Values Among Koreans and Korean Americans,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 25 (2001): 205-6. Neo-Confucianism is a more rationalist and secular form of Confucianism formulated by Zhu Xi and became a prominent ideology during the Song (960-1279) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties in China.

<sup>23</sup> Haksoon Yim, “Cultural Identity and Cultural Policy in South Korea,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8, no. 1 (2002): 38; Hyun, “Sociocultural Change and Traditional Values: Confucian Values Among Koreans and Korean Americans,” 205-6.



Korean government has succeeded in establishing a strong national identity among Koreans through cultural policies that often emphasize the importance of idealized Korean culture.<sup>24</sup> This national identity was critical to South Korea's economic and social development in the mid- and late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and also for cohesion vis-à-vis North Korea.<sup>25</sup> Thus the weakening of idealized culture, due to the increasing influence of individualism and notions of equality imported from the West, inevitably had a deep impact on the nation.

The family crisis and the sense of erosion of idealized Korean culture are closely related to changes regarding the roles of Korean women in the private sphere. As Okin insightfully points out, the private sphere is at the center of many cultures because many cultural practices are carried out in the private sphere. For example, foodways are a significant part of culture, and food preparation and consumption takes place, most often, in the private sphere. In addition, personal laws concerning sex, reproduction, marriage and divorce, are also practiced and preserved primarily through family relationships within the private sphere. An ideal image of Korean culture is often symbolized by images of women who have traditional characteristics and perform traditional roles in the private sphere; obedient wives, wise mothers and servant-like daughters-in-law, who produce children (especially sons) to continue the paternal lineage, take charge of household management, especially looking after the younger and older generation, and work hard to help their husbands to increase family income so that their children can have better educational opportunities. Korean women are traditionally expected to make self-sacrificing efforts for their family members, to abandon their own identity, and devote their lives to familial roles.<sup>26</sup>

As mentioned, these docile images of Korean women have often been used to represent idealized Korean culture. The Blue House (*Cheongwadae*, the executive office and official residence of the head of Korean state) often promotes such a vision overseas with images of the First Lady, Kim Yoon-ok, making Korean dishes (often wearing traditional Korean dress). During the 2010 G-20 Seoul Summit, the Blue House published a book purportedly authored by the First Lady, *HANSIK: Stories of Korean Food by Kim, Yoon-Ok*, and distributed copies to summit leaders and their

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<sup>24</sup> Yim, "Cultural Identity and Cultural Policy in South Korea," 38.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Chua, "Women's Self-sacrifice."

wives in order to promote Korean cuisine and culture.<sup>27</sup> This example supports Okin's argument; that culture is more often expected to be enacted in the private sphere than the public sphere.<sup>28</sup> Therefore women, as the prime actors in the private sphere, are more likely to be regarded as responsible for cultural performances. This is borne out in government practice.

Nowadays, as more young Korean women than ever receive advanced levels of education, and frequently participate in the labor market, their conformity to their traditional functions in the private sphere has been weakened to a certain extent. Korean women have also been influenced by principles of gender equality, so many dislike conforming to patriarchal family norms, and insist on their right to determine whether to perform these traditional functions or how to do so. Nevertheless, in reality, gender roles in Korea have remained strongly dichotomized; in this dichotomy, men work outside the home and women stay at home doing domestic jobs, such as raising children. Many women in Korea now work outside the home, but they are still in full charge of duties in the private sphere. But although these changes in to traditional characteristics and functions of women have been limited, they have contributed to the discourses of the family crisis and the sense of an erosion of idealized Korean culture. In short, the family crisis that has, in part, resulted from changes to the traditional characteristics and functions of Korean women is, in fact, a crisis of idealized Korean culture, which is both strongly patriarchal, and the pillar of the nation.

The sense of erosion of idealized Korean culture is also related to the relative decline and depopulation of Korea's rural areas, since Korean culture is idealized largely as it was seen to be in older, agrarian community lifestyles in which extended families were the norm. Because rural areas have been less influenced by modernity than urban areas, they tend to have preserved more characteristics of traditional Korean culture. In other words, rural areas have undergone a revival in the national

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<sup>27</sup> Yeong-joo Jo, "[G20] First Lady Kim Yoon-ok, 'Hansik' Book Gifts for Spouses of Summit Leaders," *Asia Economy*, November 12, 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Susan Okin, ed., *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 12-3.

imagination as the cradle of ideal Korean culture, and people from urban areas or other countries often go to rural areas to experience and learn about Korean culture.<sup>29</sup>

Until the 1970s, when industrialization and urbanization started to accelerate, the majority of the population lived in rural areas. However, in recent decades, the rural population has rapidly decreased and aged, and the function of the countryside as a center for ideal Korean culture has become uncertain. During the industrialization period in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, many young people, especially women from poor families, moved to cities to look for better employment opportunities to support their families, while their brothers stayed behind and continued to work on the family farm and care for their parents.<sup>30</sup> This led to a sex-ratio imbalance among young people in rural areas, making it increasingly difficult for rural men to find brides. The sex-ratio imbalance in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was also caused, in part, by sex-selective abortions, which created an overall shortage of brides.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, since the country's entry to the WTO in 1995, the agricultural industry has become less profitable, and rural areas have become even less desirable for women. All of these factors made it hard for rural bachelors to find a Korean partner to start a new family. As the Korean countryside has become increasingly unsustainable, idealized Korean culture has been seen to be in growing danger of fading away.

In summary, this section has shown how family, women, culture, rural areas and nation are intertwined in the Korean context. Koreans perpetuate the notion of an idealized Korean culture within a family that is based on Neo-Confucianism, that has its roots in rural areas, and that forms the patriarchal pillar of Korean nation. Family is, in general, the primary unit of social organization for most individuals, thus the influence of family members, especially of mothers, is crucial in building an individual's identity during the early stages of their life, an important facet of which is cultural identity. Women, in the Korean nation, are in charge of educating their children about cultural habits. Thus the erosion of idealized Korean culture through the family crisis and rural decline, which disrupts existing Korean national identity

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<sup>29</sup> Sang-gook Kim, "Learn Traditional Culture in Korean Countryside," *The Korea Times*, March 24, 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Eungi Kim, "Demography, Migration and Multiculturalism in South Korea," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, accessed April 12, 2012, [http://japanfocus.org/-Andrew\\_Eungi-Kim/3035](http://japanfocus.org/-Andrew_Eungi-Kim/3035).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

and unity, and ultimately threatens the nation itself. Therefore, along with reviving rural areas, restoring the idealized family system in which women retain their traditional characteristics and perform traditional functions and roles has been a principal task for the Korean government.

### ***Female Marriage Migrants within a Patriarchal Family Structure***

Many female marriage migrants experience similar situations when they come to live in Korea, as they often join lower class families, especially families in rural areas where patriarchy remains strongest. Lower class families tend to have stronger traditional cultural traits in comparison to families that have been transformed (or Westernized) through modernization, since their relatively low socioeconomic status in society prevents them from doing otherwise. Many of the families in which female marriage migrants settle are these lower class families. This is because most Korean men who seek international marriages have low socioeconomic status; given that they are not seen as desirable partner in a competitive marriage market, they attempt to find a wife overseas.

Rural bachelors are typical examples of marginalized men in Korean society, and the international marriage boom that began in the 1990s originated amongst them. Local governments contributed to this boom by launching a “Getting Rural Bachelors Married (*nongchonchonggak janggabonaegi*)” project, and enacted ordinances to financially support bachelors in finding a bride overseas and starting a family in their areas.<sup>32</sup> Many of these Korean men looked for a wife overseas through international marriage brokers, who tend to follow a standard procedure, first taking customers (Korean men) on a seven to ten day trip to the country of origin of prospective brides.<sup>33</sup> The men meet several potential brides, and choose one. After a hastily arranged wedding and registration of the marriage in the country of the bride’s origin, the husband returns to Korea and registers the marriage again in Korea in order to be able to send his bride an invitation for immigration purposes. In this type of marriage,

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<sup>32</sup> Hyun Mee Kim, “The State and Migrant Women: Diverging Hopes in the Making of ‘Multicultural Families’ in Contemporary Korea,” *Korea Journal* 47, no. 4 (2007): 101.

<sup>33</sup> Danièle Bélanger, “Marriages with Foreign Women in East Asia: Bride Trafficking or Voluntary Migration?” *Population & Societies*, no. 469 (2010): 3.

the dating period is very short or even non-existent. Nonetheless, with this support from local governments, international marriages in rural areas reached 40% in 2006 (nationally, the proportion of international marriages was only 11.9%).<sup>34</sup>

As noted above, due to the rural origin of many of these Korean husbands, their families tend to have stronger patriarchal norms and structures. Of course, many of the brides also come from countries influenced by Confucianism, such as China or Vietnam, so may not struggle to adapt to these norms. However, in China and Vietnam, hierarchical Confucianism relations have been much weakened by Communist principles of gender equality.<sup>35</sup> Many female marriage migrants from Vietnam, for example, grew up within families where mothers exerted a great deal of power. These women do experience difficulties in adapting to the patriarchal family system in Korea.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Koreans are well-known for having maintained a stronger Confucian legacy than other Asian countries.<sup>37</sup>

The second situation that female marriage migrants share is that, by definition they have come to Korea for marriage with a Korean man. However, these women come to Korea not only to create a new nuclear household with a Korean husband, but as an arrival into an existing Korean family. In traditional thought, women in Korea were no longer considered as members of their own family when they married. Although this tradition has dissipated, women are still expected to assimilate into the family of their husband. Female marriage migrants are expected to leave their country of origin, and to become a full member of their husband's family. In addition, since they come to Korea for marriage, they are primarily situated in the private sphere unless they obtain a job after arriving in Korea, which is unlikely until they become familiar with the language and general society. As a result, these women lack a broader social footing, which makes them vulnerable to discrimination and abuse by members of

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<sup>34</sup> Jae-seon Joo, "Data Analysis: Rural Men Look for Wives Overseas!" *Gender Review*, no. 5 (2007): 65-6.

<sup>35</sup> Kim, "The State and Migrant Women: Diverging Hopes in the Making of 'Multicultural Families' in Contemporary Korea," 114.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with NGO workers, July 4, 2011.

<sup>37</sup> In fact, Koreans were so passionate in internalizing the Confucian ideology during the Joseon dynasty period (1392-1910) that even Confucianists in China (where Confucianism originated) considered Koreans more "virtuous" than themselves. See Hyun, "Sociocultural Change and Traditional Values: Confucian Values Among Koreans and Korean Americans," 206.

their new family.<sup>38</sup> Their vulnerability in the household supports the feminist observation that the private sphere is not an intimate and romantic space, but a hierarchical space, and can be oppressive to women.

A final condition for many female marriage migrants is that their Korean husband is often much older. In 2010, more than half (62.6%) of the international marriages between Korean men (excluding “naturalized” Korean men) and foreign brides, the husbands were at least ten years older than their wives, in comparison to a figure of 3.2% for Korean couples.<sup>39</sup> About half of female marriage migrants (46.6%) were in their twenties at the time of their marriage to a Korean husband, whereas their husbands were over 40.<sup>40</sup> This is significant; Bradley, in particular, emphasizes the importance of age as a determining factor of social stratification alongside gender, ethnicity and class. Although she recognizes that age does not bring high status automatically, as she argues, it contributes. In industrialized societies, the middle-aged are generally in relatively more powerful positions than younger or older age groups.<sup>41</sup> In addition, contrary to Bradley’s argument, age can in fact function as a determining factor if it is embodied in a culture which uses age as a primary factor in determining hierarchies. In Korea, even a one-year age gap can affect the level of politeness used in speech as a way of showing respect to the elder.

Okin also identified this form of patriarchy based on age. Within immigrant communities, it is not only male leaders but also elderly women who are often co-opted into reinforcing patriarchy, who support multicultural group rights to preserve cultural practices that might be oppressive for younger women.<sup>42</sup> One of the most relevant examples of hierarchical relationships in Korea based on age is the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. In Korean tradition, based as it is on Confucian ideology, women are expected to be subordinate to not only their

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<sup>38</sup> Seongmikyong Kim (President, Asian Women’s Community/ Incheon Women’s Hotline), interview by author, July 14, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Statistics Korea, “Multicultural Population Statistics,” accessed November 22, 2011, <http://kostat.go.kr>. The figure had been steadily high before 2010: 63.1% in 2008 and 58% in 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Harriet Bradley, *Fractured Identities: Changing Patterns of Inequality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 147.

<sup>42</sup> Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, 24.

husbands, but also to their mother-in-law when they marry.<sup>43</sup> The mother-in-law has authority to supervise and educate the daughter-in-law, and to punish her for wrongdoing.<sup>44</sup> While the patriarchal characteristics of this style of relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law have been weakened as a result of modernization and increasing diversity in family types, the tradition has not disappeared, and remains strong in some traditional families, especially in rural areas. Thus, the younger age of female marriage migrants makes them even more vulnerable to mistreatment or abuse from their older husband and other older members of the family, especially mothers-in-law. Significant age gaps and consequent differences in beliefs and lifestyle are often viewed as contributing to family conflicts.<sup>45</sup>

Recently, a considerable number of incidents have raised concern about the seriousness of the issue of discrimination against, and abuse of, female marriage migrants in their own households. In 2008, a Vietnamese woman committed suicide after suffering violence at the hands of her husband and mother-in-law.<sup>46</sup> In 2011, a Vietnamese woman was charged with an attempt to murder her mother-in-law by serving her a bowl of rice with rat poison added.<sup>47</sup> She explained herself by saying “[I] was verbally abused and constantly [looked down] by [my mother-in-law].”<sup>48</sup> Also in 2011, another Vietnamese woman was stabbed to death by her Korean husband in front of their infant, because she asked him for a divorce.<sup>49</sup> The following month, a memorial service was organized by a small group of female marriage migrants and Korean feminist activists for seven female marriage migrants to Korea who had officially been recognized as murdered in domestic violence cases.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Myung-Hye Kim, “Changing Relationships between Daughters-in-Law and Mothers-in-Law in Urban South Korea,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (1996): 187.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with MFSC workers, July 8, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Young-hun Jang, “Vietnamese Bride, Another Tragedy by Husband’s Deadly Weapon,” *DongAilbo*, May 25, 2011. In fact, Korea has the largest gender wage gap in the OECD. In 2010, female full-time workers earned about 39% less than their male counterparts. See Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “OECD Gender Initiative,” accessed June 19, 2012, <http://www.oecd.org>

<sup>47</sup> Hyo-sik Lee, “Vietnamese Wife Attempts to Poison Mother-in-law,” *The Korea Times*, August 09, 2011.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Jang, “Vietnamese Bride, Another Tragedy by Husband’s Deadly Weapon.”

<sup>50</sup> *The Women’s News*, “Memorial Service for Migrant Women Killed in Domestic Violence,” June 10, 2011; Seongmikyong Kim (President, Asian Women’s Community/ Incheon Women’s Hotline), interview by author, July 14, 2011.

In addition, there has been increasing breakdown of multicultural families that consist of a foreign wife and a Korean husband, and the number of divorces among these families increased between 2004 and 2011 (see table 2). Of course, an increase in the number of divorce cases is not necessarily surprising considering that the number of international marriages between foreign brides and Korean men has grown substantially during the past decade. Nevertheless, this increase in divorce cases has contributed to a perception that multicultural families are unstable, therefore justifying government intervention into the private sphere of female marriage migrants.

<Table 2. International Marriages and Divorces between 2004 and 2010><sup>51</sup>

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Marriage (foreign wives)	25,105	30,719	29,665	28,580	28,163	25,142	26,274	22,265
Marriage (foreign husbands)	9,535	11,637	9,094	8,980	8,041	8,158	7,961	7,497
Marriage (total)	34,640	42,356	38,759	37,560	36,204	33,300	34,235	29,762
Divorce (foreign wives)	1,567	2,382	3,933	5,609	7,901	8,246	7,852	8,349
Divorce (foreign husbands)	1,733	1,789	2,203	2,685	3,079	3,227	3,236	3,146
Divorce (total)	3,300	4,171	6,136	8,294	10,980	11,473	11,088	11,495

In short, many female marriage migrants live primarily in the private sphere, incorporated into Korean families with much older family members who uphold a patriarchal system. The issue of discrimination against, and abuse of, female marriage migrants in their own households calls for government intervention, and the Korean government has implemented various policies in order to alleviate this issue (policies I will expand upon in Chapter Four). There are elements to this intervention that

<sup>51</sup> Korean Statistical Information Service, “Statistics by Themes; Marriage & Divorce.”



feminist scholars may find praise-worthy; when Okin made her argument that the private sphere is oppressive for women, she was also (indirectly) criticizing the ignorance of governments in Western, pluralist societies regarding illiberal aspects of the private sphere. Unlike these governments, the Korean government has actively intervened in the private sphere to “protect” these women. However, this Korean government intervention has not necessarily been beneficial, because the government has intended to resolve the issue within, and with, the structure of a patriarchal family system. In addition, the government has used these women for the purpose of nation-building, mobilizing female marriage migrants for just this purpose. In conclusion, by attempting to resolve the issue of discrimination in the private sphere, yet using these women for a nation-building purpose, the government breaches these women’s rights and self-determination. In the next chapter, I will address this matter directly, showing how the Korean government has intervened in the private spheres of female marriage migrants, and will discuss the impacts of the intervention upon the women themselves.

## **Chapter Four: Female Marriage Migrants in South Korea's Nation-Building**

This chapter looks at the government policies affecting female marriage migrants and their families, and examines the purposes of such policies. First, I will outline the policies implemented based on the Support for Multicultural Families Act of 2008, an act prescribing responses Korean government agencies should make to the needs of female marriage migrants and their families. This law requires provision of programs and services, including Korean language and culture classes, workshops on family relationships, and childcare and child education support. This law, and subsequent additional policies, supports these women in facilitating their adaptation to Korea, and in stabilizing their families.

However, it is necessary to problematize the government's desire that female marriage migrants adapt to Korea, and that their families become stable. I now shall explore this desire in relation to the challenges that the nation has faced in recent years, and argue that the policies are designed to mobilize female marriage migrants to perform as symbols of an idealized Korean culture that upholds patriarchy, as biological and cultural reproducers of the nation, as caregivers for the elderly, and as saviors of rural communities. By using female marriage migrants for these purposes, the government intends to maintain national unity through reinforcing the patriarchal pillar of the nation. Secondly, the government intends to make Korea an advanced nation in the international arena through increasing national competitiveness based on unity and incubating multicultural children as valuable national resources for the future.

### ***Policies for Female Marriage Migrants and Their Families***

*"You are a beloved wife.*

*You are a respected mother.*

*You are a wonderful daughter-in-law.*

*You are a valuable new citizen of Korea.*

*[We] will be your reliable friend and we will help you plan for a brighter future in Korea.*

*We love you.*”<sup>1</sup>

<From a guidebook *Let's Live a Happy Life in Korea* published by the Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, renamed as Ministry of Health & Welfare in 2010>

Government agencies have implemented a wide range of supportive policy measures for female marriage migrants and their families based on the Support for Multicultural Families Act. The act states that both central and local governments are responsible for helping female marriage migrants, not only with social adaptation, but also in having a happy, stable marriage and family life (Article 3).<sup>2</sup> Government policy measures developed on the basis of the act are mainly delivered through the nationwide network of government-sponsored Multicultural Family Support Centers (MFSCs). Although there were only 37 MFSCs in 2007, by 2011 the number had reached 210.<sup>3</sup> Since all MFSCs are under the control of the Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, they have similar structures, programs and services, but some have additional programs and services in order to meet local needs; for example, MFSCs in rural areas offer agricultural education programs.

Most importantly, MFSCs offer educational programs and services to facilitate female marriage migrants' smooth adaptation to Korean family life and society (see table 1).<sup>4</sup> They provide female marriage migrants with classes in Korean language and culture, as well as skills based training, such as computer classes for employment opportunities. However, according to a team leader at the South Gyeongsang Provincial MFSC, the former type of education designed for integration of female

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, Republic of Korea, “Let's Live a Happy Life in Korea: Guide Book for Marriage-based Immigrants in Korea,” accessed 25 October 2011, <http://www.129.go.kr>.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Government Legislation, Republic of Korea, “Support for Multicultural Families Act,” accessed January 15, 2012, <http://www.moleg.go.kr>.

<sup>3</sup> Nam-il Kim, “We Are All Migrants,” *Hankyoreh* 21, April 25, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Danuri (Multicultural Family Support Portal Site), “Multicultural Family Support Centers,” accessed Oct 15, 2011, <http://www.liveinkorea.kr>.

marriage migrants is the main focus of MFSCs rather than the later, since many MFSCs do not have capacity to deliver both.<sup>5</sup> The MFSCs also offer translation and interpreting services, and free legal counseling services.<sup>6</sup>

MFSCs also host various multicultural events such as multicultural markets, festivals, and advocacy seminars regarding multicultural society for members of multicultural families and the public. Nevertheless, the public interest is low; one of my interviewees said that voluntary participation of the public was so low that they had to ask local schools to send students to the multicultural festival to fill the empty space.<sup>7</sup> Also, during my field research I enrolled to attend one of the MFSC advocacy seminars regarding multicultural society, but I was informed a day before that the seminar had been canceled because of low participation.

The existence of these multicultural activities does not mean an absence of assimilationist aspirations. As I argued in my introduction, the nation-building purpose of multiculturalism pursues national unity based on having shared a culture (traditional, political or civic) among people, thus it is almost inevitable to pursue assimilation to a certain degree. The quarterly magazine *Rainbow*, published by the Ministry of Gender Equality & Family frequently demonstrates these aspirations. For example, a fairy tale from the magazine tells a story about a female marriage migrant becoming a “Korean” who experienced difficulty in adapting herself to using chopsticks and eating spicy Korean food, but was determined to master these customs.<sup>8</sup> In this story, her mother-in-law tells her foreign daughter-in-law “in order to become a Korean, you need to be good at using chopsticks...[and] eat garlic.” In fact, it has been widely argued by scholars that the Korean government intends to

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<sup>5</sup> Hyeon-hee Lee (Team Leader, South Gyeongsang Provincial Multicultural Family Support Center), in interview with the author, June 27, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> These programs and services are not unique to Korea; in fact, some other countries where immigration is common, such as Canada and New Zealand, also provide immigrants with these types of programs and services to help them to adapt to their new society. Examples include the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada, “Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP),” accessed May 7, 2012, <http://www.peiinc.com>; Immigration New Zealand, “Settlement Services,” accessed May 7, 2012, <http://www.immigration.govt.nz/>.

<sup>7</sup> Hyeon-hee Lee (Team Leader, South Gyeongsang Provincial Multicultural Family Support Center), in interview with the author, June 27, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Byeong-hee Im, “A Story of Natalie’s Challenge to Become a Korean,” *Rainbow*, Spring vol. 9, 2010, 10-12.

assimilate female marriage migrants to Korean family life and society through encouraging them to learn Korean language and culture at MFSCs.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, MFSCs offer seminars and workshops to improve family relationships, consultation services to prevent breakdown of multicultural families, support services for pregnancy, childbirth, childcare and even child education, and emergency services, such as providing shelter for victims of domestic violence (see table below).<sup>10</sup> These programs and services are not common in Western countries with histories of immigration, and are unique to Korea. They demonstrate the extent to which the Korean government intends to be involved in the private lives of female marriage migrants and their multicultural families, and the desire to manage of these families through policy measures.

<Table 1. Support for Multicultural Families Act and related policy implementation in MFSCs' programs and services>

<b>SMFA</b>	<b>MFSCs' Programs &amp; Services</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancement of understanding of multicultural families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular seminars on multiculturalism.</li> <li>• Advocacy activities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of information about daily life and educational support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Korean language and culture classes.</li> <li>• Social integration programs.</li> <li>• Employment education and support.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measures for maintenance of equality in familial relationship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multicultural family integration classes, including classes on how to maintain happy family relationships with their husbands, wives or in-laws.</li> <li>• Multicultural family counseling services.</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Hyun Mee Kim, "The State and Migrant Women: Diverging Hopes in the Making of 'Multicultural Families' in Contemporary Korea," *Korea Journal* 47, no. 4 (2007): 106; Kyoung-Hee Moon, "Analysis of 'the Crisis of Multiculturalism' in Europe and Korean Multicultural Policies: Focusing on Policies for Female Migrants" (paper presented at the 2011 Association for Korean Studies in Europe Conference, Moscow State University, June 17-20, 2011); Ji-eun Kim, "The Making of 'the Korean Wife': The Institutionalization of Marriage Migration in the Cases of Vietnamese Women," *Seoul National University Cross-Cultural Studies* 13, no. 2 (2007): 60.

<sup>10</sup> Danuri (Multicultural Family Support Portal Site), "Multicultural Family Support Centers."

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of support for victims of domestic violence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency support centers, providing temporary shelters and/or departure supporting services for victims.</li> <li>• Free legal counseling services.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for health management before and after childbirth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pregnancy and childbirth guide services.</li> <li>• Nurturing education.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care and education of children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational programs to be good parents.</li> <li>• Language development support services.</li> <li>• Education assistant services with reading, writing, homework.</li> <li>• Social skill development coaching services.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of services in diverse languages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation and interpreting services.</li> </ul>

These measures are not available for other categories of foreign residents. The Korean government has bluntly expressed its special interest in female marriage migrants and their families, especially their children. The statement quoted in the beginning of this chapter is addressed to female marriage migrants. Written in personal language, the statement shows the government's willingness to have female marriage migrants as legitimate members of Korean families and the Korean state, but, at the same time, its desire to reconstruct their identities within family. Neither this extraordinary level of acceptance by the government, nor this friendly approach, is applied to any other category of foreigners, not even male marriage-based immigrants. In fact, although the guidebook is published for both male and female marriage migrants, there is no special statement addressed to male marriage-based immigrants. This discriminatory government approach to female marriage migrants and male marriage-based immigrants exists because of the Korea's patrilineal family structure normative to Korean society. Female marriage migrants are perceived to be more legitimate members of society because they are married to a Korean man, while male marriage migrants are only married to a Korean woman.

Not surprisingly then, the programs and services at MFSCs are designed almost entirely for female marriage migrants. According to one MFSC worker whom I interviewed, the Ministry of Gender Equality & Family recently made a rhetorical announcement to MFSCs that other categories of foreign residents, such as foreign workers and North Korean refugees, are eligible to participate in these programs and receive some of the services offered.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the government has neither formally expanded the scope of beneficiaries of multiculturalism to include these foreign residents, nor implemented changes to the structure and content of the programs and services MFSCs provide to facilitate the participation of other categories of foreign residents than female marriage migrants.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, MFSCs remain as government agencies for female marriage migrants exclusively.

In fact, the Support for Multicultural Families Act is the only law enacted under the name of multiculturalism in Korea. This government's embrace of a particular group of foreign residents, female marriage migrants, under the name of multiculturalism while excluding other foreign residents shows a very limited domain for multiculturalism in Korea. In other words, Korean multiculturalism is only applicable to those foreign residents who come to Korea as a family member to a Korean citizen, particularly a *male* citizen. Thus even families are excluded from the multicultural framework when they consist of a foreign couple (without a Korean citizen), to say nothing of the exclusion of solo foreign workers. In this way, the government discriminates against the 90% of its foreign residents who are not female marriage migrants.

However, the government approach to female marriage migrants is problematic. Though it is preferential, it is paradoxically discriminatory, in that it undermines these women's rights in terms of maintaining their own identity, or in terms of deciding how to rebuild their identity in Korea. This is because government policy measures encourage women to reconstruct their identities within, and in relation to, their family as wives, mothers and daughters-in-law in Korea. Another MFSC worker viewed a reconstruction of the identity of female marriage migrants as a member of their new family in Korea as important, especially in the early stage of their marriage, saying

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<sup>11</sup> Hyeon-hee Lee (Team Leader, South Gyeongsang Provincial Multicultural Family Support Center), in interview with the author, June 27, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

“female marriage migrants have come to Korea with the purpose of forming a family...their families are sustainable only when female marriage migrants find their own identities within the family...once they find their identities within family, [they can participate in society].”<sup>13</sup> Female marriage migrants are expected to devote themselves, at least for the first few years, to developing their new identities within the family, because they were allowed to come and live in Korea on the basis of marrying a Korean man and forming a family. This expectation could reasonably be said to form the basis of government justifications for putting pressure on female marriage migrants to assimilate to Korean family and society.

Finally, I argue that the government approach is problematic because, as I will demonstrate in the next sections, it puts forward the characteristics and functions of traditional Korean women as the template that should be followed. In this way, the patriarchal family structure and culture are inculcated by the government into female marriage migrants. This approach encourages female marriage migrants to take on the roles in the private sphere, and often prevents these women from enhancing their social activities and footing.

### ***The Purposes of Female Marriage Migrants Policies***

The government acknowledges that the primary purpose in introducing multicultural family policies for female marriage migrants is to facilitate their adaptation to a new environment. The Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea takes precedence as a superordinate statute, and other laws and policies regarding foreign residents must comply with it.<sup>14</sup> Article 12 of this Act says, “the state and local governments can support [marriage migrants and their children] by providing education on the Korean language, laws and culture, and [also] support for nurturing and education of the children [so that] they *quickly* adapt themselves to Korean society [emphasis added].”<sup>15</sup> To accelerate adaptation, the government has implemented the policies

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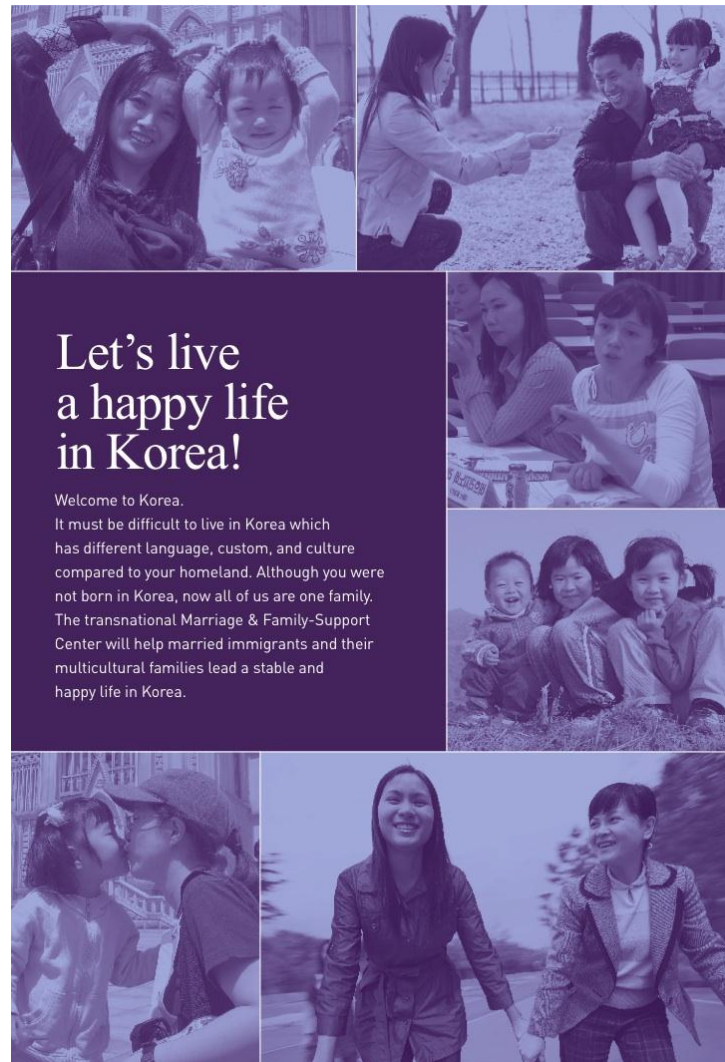
<sup>13</sup> Interview with MFSC worker, June 27, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Government Legislation, Republic of Korea, “The Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea,” accessed January 15, 2012, <http://www.moleg.go.kr>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



outlined above and delivered them in practice through offering educational programs at MFSCs around the country.



<From *Let's Live a Happy Life in Korea*; "the transnational marriage & family-support center" in the text is referred as Multicultural Family Support Centers in this thesis>

It is worth noting that education is one area in which the government helps all foreign residents with their adaptation to Korean society, particularly by giving subsidies to social organizations, such as universities, to operate the Korea Immigration and Integration Program (KIIP).<sup>16</sup> KIIP consists of different levels of Korean language

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Justice, Republic of Korea, "A Guide to Social Integration Program (KIIP)," accessed 24 October 2011, <http://www.kiip.kr/>.

courses and a Korean society comprehension course. However, as I have underlined, the government puts a greater emphasis on the adaptation of female marriage migrants than they do on the adaptation of other foreign residents. This emphasis is evident in that in addition to the Korean language and cultural programs offered at MFSCs, the government encourages female marriage migrants to enroll in KIIP by offering to shorten the processing time for the naturalization of marriage migrants who complete KIIP, even exempting them from a written exam and interview for naturalization.<sup>17</sup>

Through helping female marriage migrants with adaptation, the government intends to stabilize multicultural families, and to improve quality of life – not only for female marriage migrants themselves, but also for the Korean members of multicultural families. The Support for Multicultural Families Act says that the policies for female marriage migrants are “to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life [for members of multicultural families] by helping [them] to enjoy the stable family living.”<sup>18</sup>

However, the government intention to stabilize multicultural families by encouraging female marriage migrants in better adaptation (or more specifically, better assimilation) to Korean family and society is, as I have noted, deeply problematic. The intention itself suggests that the government’s view is that female marriage migrants should take the responsibility of constructing a happy family by improving their knowledge of Korean language and culture, while their Korean husband is relatively free from this responsibility. In addition, the government expectation that multicultural families will become more stable if female marriage migrants adapt themselves better to Korean family and society is naïve. It is not clear how much influence differing languages and cultures have had on the breakdown of multicultural families, because there are several reasons for the breakdown of multicultural families that must also be considered, including domestic violence, economic hardship, personality differences, unmet marriage conditions and disease.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Justice, Republic of Korea, “A Guide to Social Integration Program (KIIP).”

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Government Legislation, Republic of Korea, “Support for Multicultural Families Act.”

<sup>19</sup> Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations, “Press Release- 2011 Statistics for Counseling of Multicultural Families,” accessed May 11, 2012, <http://www.lawhome.or.kr>.

Here it is necessary to ask why the government wants female marriage migrants to adapt themselves better to Korean family and society, and why it wants their families to become more stable. I argue that the very purpose of the special attention and government policies for female marriage migrants is to mobilize them to contribute to minimize the (perceived) negative impact of the challenges that Korea has faced in recent years, as I discussed in Chapter Three. I shall now demonstrate that these policies are designed to serve the patriarchal interests, and the nation-building purpose of multiculturalism, through encouraging female marriage migrants to perform as symbols of the idealized Korean culture, as biological and cultural reproducers of the nation, as caregivers for the elderly, and as saviors of rural communities.

### ***Female Marriage Migrants as Biological Reproducers***

First of all, through encouraging female marriage migrants to perform the functions of traditional Korean women, the government hopes to increase the country's birth rate. In recent years, government agencies have implemented extensive pro-natal policies for the general public; however, it has offered extra support for female marriage migrants and their multicultural families.<sup>20</sup> For example, all multicultural families are entitled to receive "free" (a 100% subsidy based on a limit the government has defined) childcare and education for their children (between 0 to 5 years old), regardless of their total income.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, the eligibility of families in which both parents are Korean to receive this support is determined by income.<sup>22</sup> As mentioned earlier, the government has also provided female marriage migrants with home-based services to help them with pregnancy, childbirth and childcare. Once babies begin making verbal sounds, speech therapists from MFSCs visit multicultural families to help with language development. These services are only available for multicultural families, and they are also free.

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<sup>20</sup> For measures from each government agency, see Government of the Republic of Korea, "The 2<sup>nd</sup> Plan for Ageing Society and Population (2011-2015)," accessed April 26, 2012, <http://momplus.mw.go.kr>, 265.

<sup>21</sup> Government of the Republic of Korea, "The 2<sup>nd</sup> Plan for Ageing Society and Population (2011-2015)."

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

The reason the government provides multicultural families with pro-natal policies can be given as the fact that many multicultural families fall among the lower socioeconomic strata of Korea. But not all multicultural families are in a position that needs the special support. Explanation based solely on the generalization of multicultural families as being situated in the lower class neglects the underlying intention of policies for female marriage migrants and multicultural families; as Hyun Mee Kim argues, they are viewed as easier “targets” in the government’s campaigns to increase the country’s birth rate.<sup>23</sup> The government has experienced difficulty increasing the country’s birth rate through encouraging Korean families, because the incentives offered have not been strong enough to convince Korean families to comply.<sup>24</sup> Nowadays, raising children is increasingly considered a luxury activity. Not only do many people have an unstable and insecure employment status, few think they can afford to have multiple children, because of the high cost and investment of time involved in raising children.<sup>25</sup>

But compared to families in which both parents are Korean, pro-natal policies for female marriage migrants and their families have been successful. The number of children born in multicultural families increased from 13,443 in 2008 to 20,312 in 2010 (66% increase).<sup>26</sup> This increase is even more significant given the fact that the number of international marriages decreased slightly from 42,356 in 2005 to 34,235 in 2010 (the average marriage period for interethnic unions before having the first child is 2.7 years).<sup>27</sup> By contrast, the number of newborns in Korean families in fact decreased from 452,449 in 2008 to 449,859 in 2010. This increase in the number of babies in multicultural families, combined with the decrease in the number in Korean families, increased the proportion of children born to multicultural families from 2.9% in 2008 to 4.3% in 2010.<sup>28</sup> The proportion is higher in rural areas; in South Jeolla

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<sup>23</sup> Kim, “The State and Migrant Women: Diverging Hopes in the Making of ‘Multicultural Families’ in Contemporary Korea,” 107.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ha-woon Seong, “How Many Children Do Husbands-to-be and Wives-to-be Want?” *DongAilbo*, June 23, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Statistics Korea, “Multicultural Population Statistics,” accessed November 22, 2011, <http://kostat.go.kr>.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.; Statistics Korea, “Status of International Marriages,” accessed April 28, 2012, <http://kostat.go.kr>.

<sup>28</sup> Statistics Korea, “Multicultural Population Statistics.”

Province, 7.8% of new-borns in 2010 were from multicultural families.<sup>29</sup> As Statistics Korea explained, “areas where the number of multicultural families is increasing show a marked tendency to have a higher birth rate.”<sup>30</sup> These figures show that female marriage migrants have been responding to the government’s pro-natal policies, and contributing to the increase in the country’s birth rate.

It seems reasonable to accept Hyun Mee Kim’s claim that female marriage migrants have been perceived by the government “as the most easily mobilized *resources* [emphasis added]” to resolve the twin issues of low birth rate and ageing population.<sup>31</sup> This perception, the view that female marriage migrants are biological reproducers of members of the nation is, of course, deeply problematic; these women are essentially considered instruments of Korean reproduction. Thus, the government’s view is little different from the popular view of female marriage migrants as “human-beings that reproduce children after getting married to Korean men.”<sup>32</sup> The government view therefore undermines women’s self-determination regarding having children, and their reproductive rights, including the right not to have children.

Government management of female marriage migrants becomes even more problematic when the rights of female marriage migrants become dependent on whether they have reproduced. The processing time for naturalization applications of female marriage migrants takes twice as long if no child is born between marriage migrants and a Korean spouse.<sup>33</sup> Also, in cases of divorce before obtaining Permanent Residency or Korean citizenship, a marriage migrant’s visa (F-2) expires immediately, and they are required to leave the country or remain as an “illegal” foreign resident.<sup>34</sup> However, if female marriage migrants have a child with a Korean spouse and are

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<sup>29</sup> Statistics Korea, “Multicultural Population Statistics.”

<sup>30</sup> Tae-ok Lee, “High Birth Rates in Areas Having Many Multicultural Families,” *Korean Famers and Fishermen Newspaper*, September 3, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Kim, “The State and Migrant Women: Diverging Hopes in the Making of “Multicultural Families” in Contemporary Korea,” 108.

<sup>32</sup> Ae-gyeong Yang et al., “A Study of Acceptability of Female Marriage-based Immigrants to Local Communities,” *Korean Women’s Development Institute Study Reports* (2007): 70.

<sup>33</sup> Korean Women’s Association United, “NGO Shadow Report: Republic of Korea, An Examination of the 7<sup>th</sup> Periodic Report by the Republic of Korea (2006-2009) on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,” accessed October 21, 2011, <http://www.women21.or.kr>, 28-9; Won-joo Lee and Sae-saem Lee, “Weak Protection for Divorced Women,” *DongAilbo*, February 14, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> W. Lee and S. Lee, “Weak Protection for Divorced Women.”

looking after the child, they are legally allowed to remain in the country.<sup>35</sup> This provision is not applicable to children from previous relationships in their country of origin, because the father is not a Korean citizen.

Finally, with regard to law, before the mid-2000s when the country's birth rate plummeted and the government began to see female marriage migrants as the solution, the on-going issues of discrimination against, and abuse of, female marriage migrants were not taken seriously in the government realm, and there was no special policy to protect the rights of these women. As Hyun Mee Kim points out, it does not seem a coincidence that the neglectful attitudes of the government suddenly changed when the government started to see the potential benefit in having female marriage migrants produce members of the nation.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, it can be argued that the government intends to protect the rights of female marriage migrants on the condition that female marriage migrants remain beneficial in improving Korea's current crisis of a low birth rate and an ageing population.

### *Female Marriage Migrants as Cultural Reproducers*

In addition to performing as biological reproducers of the nation, female marriage migrants are required also to perform as cultural reproducers, raising their children as valuable citizens for Korea. In the course of implementing various policies for female marriage migrants and their multicultural families that are aimed to construct a "world-class" country, children of multicultural families are viewed by the government as "valuable social resources."<sup>37</sup> President Lee Myung-bak has bluntly expressed the government's hope that the multicultural children will become talented adults, who will contribute to the global marketing of Korea and strengthen the country's diplomatic ties with the countries of their mothers.<sup>38</sup> In order to utilize these

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<sup>35</sup> Korean Women's Association United, "NGO Shadow Report: Republic of Korea, An Examination of the 7<sup>th</sup> Periodic Report by the Republic of Korea (2006-2009) on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," 28-9.

<sup>36</sup> Kim, "The State and Migrant Women: Diverging Hopes in the Making of 'Multicultural Families' in Contemporary Korea," 107.

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Justice, Republic of Korea, "The First Basic Plan regarding Policy for Foreigners, 2008-2012," accessed January 10, 2012, <http://www.moj.go.kr>, 34.

<sup>38</sup> KTV (Government Broadcasting Service), "President Lee 44<sup>th</sup> Radio & Internet Speech," accessed April 10, 2012, <http://www.ktv.go.kr>.

“valuable social resources” for the purpose of national advancement, the government has encouraged female marriage migrants to help their children use their bicultural background to cultivate bilingual language ability.

However, in reality, the government seems obsessed with making multicultural children master Korean language skills. This government obsession is probably because of concern that a lack of such skills has led to a low performance of multicultural children at school, and in severe cases causes emotional instability.<sup>39</sup> The multicultural childrens’ struggle with internalizing Korean language and culture has led to a widespread worry that they may become “juvenile delinquents” as they grow, falling into the lower class and weakening social unity in the future.<sup>40</sup> As Moon’s argument (which I drew on in Chapter One) mentions, terrorist attacks and riots in European countries have contributed to concern over the potential for multicultural children to cause social problems in Korea. In order to prevent this, the government has emphasized early Korean language education for these children.

The language and cultural programs provided by the government for female marriage migrants are offered, in part, based on an expectation that they will help multicultural children build Korean national identity. In this way the assimilationist Korean language and cultural programs offered at MFSCs are justified on the grounds that these programs enable them to better perform the function of being cultural reproducers for their multicultural children.

In addition, the government intends to help multicultural children with language development by providing them with speech therapy services, and most MFSCs have professional speech therapists on staff. But this government approach to resolving the issue of language development of multicultural children is problematic too, because it allows Korean men to avoid their responsibility to participate in and contribute to the development of their child’s language and cultural identity. Instead of encouraging these Korean men, the government hires a third party (usually women) in order to help female marriage migrants to successfully perform the function of being cultural reproducers.

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<sup>39</sup> Gi-woo Jang and In-Mo Lee, “Current Status of Korean & Mother Tongue Education,” *DongAilbo*, June 13, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Jong-gwan Lee et al., *Report on Quality of Life for Koreans in 2040* (Seoul: Hybrid-Culture Institution, Sungkyunkwan University, 2010), 196-7.

With regard to the above, my field research revealed an interesting characteristic in MFSCs; feminization. As discussed, the majority of program participants and service recipients are female marriage migrants and their families, but in addition, most workers in the centers were also women (I met only one male, a manager). No official documents specify that the programs and services of MFSCs are only for female marriage migrants. In principle, as noted above, male marriage-based immigrants and their family members are also entitled to use MFSC services. However, according to one worker, virtually none do so.<sup>41</sup> In practice, MFSCs are predominantly used, and also operated by, women.

This feminization of MFSCs is evidence of the continuing dichotomy in gender roles in Korean society, and of the government's indulgent attitudes in exempting Korean men from sharing responsibilities in the private sphere. A significant proportion of MFSC programs are related to child nurturing and education. Since nurturing and educating children are considered to be women's jobs, MFSCs are predominately used and operated by women. MFSCs, on the one hand, can be viewed as agencies to help female marriage migrants carry out all their new responsibilities and duties. However, on the other hand, they can be viewed as agencies that enable the government's compliance with the patriarchal norm that Korean men should be exempt from sharing those responsibilities and duties.

### *Female Marriage Migrants as Caregivers*

In addition to regarding female marriage migrants as responsible for children, the government also views them as caregivers for elderly Koreans. As already mentioned, the government has intended to alleviate the lack of caregiving services, and the increasing financial burden in expanding the welfare service, through restoring a sense of family loyalty, and re-traditionalizing families toward the more self-sufficient extended family structure.

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<sup>41</sup> Hyeon-hee Lee (Team Leader, South Gyeongsang Provincial Multicultural Family Support Center), in interview with the author, June 27, 2011.



In the magazine *Rainbow*, stories of female marriage migrants who live within the traditional extended family structure frequently appear.<sup>42</sup> The cover of this magazine often shows photos of happy female marriage migrants and extended Korean family members (see photos below).<sup>43</sup>



<*Rainbow* magazine cover page images; the left image (vol.9) shows a Cambodian female marriage migrant (purple top) and her four-generational extended family and the right image (vol. 11) shows a Filipina woman (with a baby) and her extended Korean family members>

The above are typical images of multicultural families in government use. They show patterns that demonstrate the government's perception of the ideal multicultural family; the families commonly have at least one child, and they have an extended family structure. *Rainbow* magazine also imposes the idea of becoming good daughters-in-law on female marriage migrants by frequently highlighting the desirable characteristics such "good" daughters-in-law should have. For example, the accompanying article includes a quote from the mother-in-law pictured in the image on the right side, in which she praises her daughter-in-law: "[she is] good-hearted, smart [in reference to the rapidly improving Korean language skills of her daughter-in-law], a good cook, [and] respectful to elders."<sup>44</sup> In addition, most of the people on the images are smiling and appear happy. The government tends to overuse the word

<sup>42</sup> See, e.g, Myeong-ah Lee, "Sunborei's Four-generation Family," *Rainbow*, Spring (Vol. 09), 2010.

<sup>43</sup> See the cover pages of the *Rainbow* magazines Spring (Vol. 09), 2010; Summer (Vol. 10), 2010; Autumn (Vol. 11), 2010; Winter (Vol. 12), 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Won-young Gang, "Neither More nor Less, But Loving the Right Amount As Now," *Rainbow*, Autumn vol. 11, 2010, 9.

happy or happiness (*haengbok*) in relation to multicultural families, which obscures the issue of discrimination against, and abuse of, female marriage migrants in their own households. This was also apparent in 2008, when more than a dozen female marriage migrants were chosen by local governments and the Ministry of Public Administration and Security as model settlement cases.<sup>45</sup> Most of these women had mastered the Korean language, successfully assimilated to the Korean culture, worked hard at home and on family farms (or had a job using their language skills), produced children, and also lived with their (often sick) parents-in-law and served them with devotion.

Further evidence suggests that the government is essentially hiring these women as caregivers for the elderly. A marriage migrant's visa expires immediately if a marriage dissolves before they obtain permanent residency or citizenship. However, if female marriage migrants are in a position to look after the parents of their ex-husbands, they are allowed to remain in the country and to seek permanent residency and citizenship in the future.<sup>46</sup> If it seems unusual to expect women to look after their ex-husband's parents, then it may seem even more unusual for the government to encourage these women to carry on in this role by providing an inducement in the form of residential rights.

In short, through encouraging female marriage migrants to master the self-sacrificing characteristics of idealized Korean women, and to maintain patriarchal family structures central to the extended form of family, the government hopes to reduce its rapidly increasing burden of providing caregiving services to the elderly. Relying, in part, on female marriage migrants to provide caregiving services is used as a cheaper and more culturally appropriate way for the government to deal with the problem of its ageing population.

### ***Female Marriage Migrants as Saviors of Rural Communities***

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<sup>45</sup> *National Conference on Exemplary Cases of Marriage Migrant Settlement and Workshop for Exploring Desirable Multicultural Family Policies* (Published by Ministry of Public Administration and Security and Korea Local Authorities Foundation for International Relations, 2008), 13-76.

<sup>46</sup> Korean Women's Association United, "NGO Shadow Report: Republic of Korea, An Examination of the 7<sup>th</sup> Periodic Report by the Republic of Korea (2006-2009) on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," 28.

As already mentioned, many local governments provide rural bachelors with financial support to find a bride overseas, and to start a family with her. By doing this, these governments expect the men to stay in their areas and contribute to the revival of their communities.<sup>47</sup> These governments also hope the wives to contribute by encouraging them to produce children to increase the rural population. In addition to producing children, female marriage migrants are expected to contribute to the alleviation of the labor shortage caused by the exodus of young people from rural areas. By 2005, the proportion of people over 60 in rural areas had reached almost 40%, and it is expected to increase to 62% by 2020.<sup>48</sup> An ageing population means that there are not enough healthy young people who can work on farms. A survey, designed to investigate the problem of the labor shortage in rural areas, reveals that about 83% of the survey participants (farm owners) have been experiencing hardship because of labor shortages.<sup>49</sup> Local governments and rural communities often consider female marriage migrants as a substitute labor force and hope that these women will contribute to the agricultural industry, and in the revival of rural communities. In order to mobilize female marriage migrants as a workforce, MFSCs and other groups dedicated to agricultural development, such as the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, offer agricultural education programs that also include lessons on agricultural policy and Korean farm culture.<sup>50</sup>

As well as alleviating the labor shortage, these agricultural education programs are often advertised by the same organizations as a way of empowering female marriage migrants by helping them develop both farming and entrepreneurial skills.<sup>51</sup> However, the reality falls far short of empowerment. Many female marriage migrants, in fact, have difficulty in pursuing their careers in farming because they are expected to do all the housework for the family at the same time. Among those women who participate

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<sup>47</sup> South Gyeongsang Province Comprehensive Information System for Administration of Justice, "Gyeongsangnamdo Provincial Rural Bachelor International Marriage Support Act," accessed October 21, 2011, <http://law.gndo.kr>.

<sup>48</sup> Jin-cheol Kim, "In 10 years, 60% of Rural Population Will be Senior Citizens," *The Hankyoreh*, December 30, 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Byeong-ryul Kim et al., *The Current Situation of Korean Agriculture Employment and Future Labor Policy in Korean Agriculture* (Seoul: Korea Rural Economic Institute, 2010), 1.

<sup>50</sup> Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, Republic of Korea, "Let's Live a Happy Life in Korea: Guide Book for Marriage-based Immigrants in Korea."

<sup>51</sup> Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, "Policy Report; 2011 Status for Support of Multicultural Families in Farming and Fishing Communities," accessed May 11, 2012, <http://www.korea.kr>.

in family farming, a significant proportion (46.2%) said their primary difficulty is carrying out housework as well as farming.<sup>52</sup> Their chores at home also prevent them from participating in the agricultural education programs. A survey revealed that about 81.8% of female marriage migrants in rural areas, whose husbands are farmers, participate in family farming.<sup>53</sup> 57% of these women answered that they participate in farming as auxiliary laborers in order to help their family members, rather than participating on an equal footing with their husbands. 23% said they have a similar workload to other family members, while 2% said they do the most of the work. In addition, the traditional sex labor division in farming also makes it difficult for female marriage migrants to empower themselves by pursuing a career in farming. It is revealed that the contribution of female marriage migrants in family farming is limited to labor-intensive chores, especially in small farming areas, and in wider commercial farming areas (over 5 hectares) their contribution diminishes, which indicates the pattern of traditional sex labor division in farming work.<sup>54</sup> Therefore the agricultural programs offered by MFSCs (and agricultural groups) may have succeeded in alleviating the problem of the labor shortage, which contributes to the revival of rural communities, but they have failed to empower female marriage migrants because they do not address the existing patriarchal attitudes and practices that are normative to family and farming industry. Instead these programs reinforce patriarchy by encouraging female marriage migrants to master the self-sacrificing characteristics of idealized traditional Korean women, and to accomplish a variety of tasks.

Female marriage migrants from rural areas who work outside of agriculture are described by people who work in the agricultural industry as having “deserted” agriculture.<sup>55</sup> In fact, the term “desertion” is commonly used by the government in reference to female marriage migrants who fail to perform their expected familial roles as a family member, by divorcing or otherwise abandoning their husband.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Hye-jung Kang, “A Factual Analysis of Agricultural Activities of Female Marriage-based Immigrants in Rural Areas,” *Journal of Rural Development* 32, no.5 (2009): 148.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>55</sup> Ji-hye Lee, “Female Migrant Farmers’ Desertion of Agriculture Causes Grave Concern,” *Korean Farmers and Fishermen Newspaper*, February 21, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Hyun Mee Kim, “Multicultural Discourse and Policy in Korean Society” (paper presented at the 2008 Jeju Human Rights Conference, Jeju, June 26-29, 2008).

From this language, it is apparent that the expectation of local governments and rural communities that female marriage migrants become good family members and valuable rural laborers undermines their autonomy, and can lead to condemnation of these women when they fail to fulfill the responsibilities that are expected of them upon arrival.

To summarize, this chapter has examined the ways in which female marriage migrants are mobilized by the government to perform a particular set of functions by the government implementation of policies through the nation-wide network of MFSCs: symbols of idealized Korean family and culture; biological reproducers; cultural reproducers; caregivers; and saviors of rural communities. Weakening of traditional family values and functions, which are at the center of the idealized Korean culture, and thus grounds the nation, has been perceived as a threat to the nation. Therefore, the Korean government has attempted to minimize negative impacts of this threat by encouraging female marriage migrants to assimilate into Korean family life and culture in order, by enabling them to symbolize traditional family values and to perform traditional family functions, so that the idealized Korean culture can survive, and thus the nation.

## Conclusion

Each multicultural society is different in terms of the strength and extensiveness of its multiculturalism; however all multicultural countries have pursued a nation-building project even under multiculturalism.<sup>1</sup> As long as the purpose of nation-building continues under multiculturalism, countries inevitably deploy assimilationist aspirations in order to maintain unity among their citizens, regardless of whether they nominally uphold monocultural, bicultural or multicultural ideologies. Citizens, regardless of their country of origin, are required to assimilate to *the nation*. By limiting the definition of multiculturalism to those societies that have a more pluralist form, as Okin did, feminist scholars have treated the pluralist form of multiculturalism as the only form of multiculturalism, focusing on the conflict between cultural rights and gender equality. As a result, they have tended to ignore the gendered implications of the assimilationist principle that forms the basis of the nation-building purpose of multiculturalism, even when it is not so obvious.

My study has addressed this gap in the feminist literature concerning multiculturalism, and contributed by shifting the feminist focus on pluralist forms of multiculturalism to an example of a more assimilationist form. In particular, I have analyzed the Korean government's purposes in the implementation of multicultural family policies affecting female marriage migrants and their multicultural families. By doing so, I have demonstrated that Korean multiculturalism is largely formulated for the nation-building purpose of reviving idealized Korean culture and strengthening national competitiveness in the globalized era by minimizing the negative impacts of the challenges that the nation has faced since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The industrialization, modernization and globalization of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought about significant changes in Korea, notably an increase in the breakdown of families, visible in the weakening of traditional loyalties, and a lessened willingness among women to perform traditional reproductive and caregiving functions, as well as rural depopulation and decline. All these changes represent an erosion of idealized Korean culture and are perceived as "threats" to the

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<sup>1</sup> Hyun Mee Kim, "Multicultural Discourse and Policy in Korean Society" (paper presented at the 2008 Jeju Human Rights Conference, Jeju, June 26-29, 2008).

nation and its development; among these, the low birth rate has been seen as the most significant. Thus increasing the birth rate became the most critical and urgent task for the Korean government, and by solving this issue, they hope to alleviate the effects of other problems, particularly the ageing of the population, and rural depopulation and decline. When the country's birth rate plummeted to a record low in the mid-2000s, the government implemented various family and pro-natal policies for the general public and, realizing its policies had been ineffective in convincing Korean women to have more children, targeted female marriage migrants with a special set of policies, seeing these women and their families as more likely to help with the goal of raising the birth rate. The government has strategically mobilized female marriage migrants by providing them with supportive policy measures under the name of multiculturalism.

This nation-building purpose to Korean multiculturalism means, at times paradoxically, that government policies compromise the human rights of female marriage migrants. Multicultural family policies encourage female marriage migrants to assimilate to Korean family life and society, and to reconstruct their identities as idealized Korean wives, mothers and daughters-in-law so that these women are able to perform traditional reproductive and caregiving functions and, by adapting well, stabilize their families. In order to achieve these goals, the government, interpreting the adaptation of female marriage migrants to Korea, and the stability of their families, as an indicator of success in mitigating the negative impacts of social change, has intervened in the private lives of these women through multicultural family policies. This intervention violates the rights of these women and their self-determination, especially in matters of identity, reproduction, and career choice.

Overall, as I have demonstrated, Korean multiculturalism is essentially constructed for a nation-building purpose and female marriage migrants are at the core of this process. In the implementation of multicultural family policies, the government announced that such policies had been designed to build a "*world-class* Korea [emphasis added]."<sup>2</sup> That such a narrative grounds multiculturalism explains why

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Justice, Republic of Korea, "The First Basic Plan regarding Policy for Foreigners, 2008-2012," accessed January 10, 2012, <http://www.moj.go.kr>, 13.

multiculturalism has been so easily embraced by nationalists in Korea.<sup>3</sup> My study has argued that in the process of nation-building and pursuing national interest within a multicultural framework, the government has ignored the negative impacts of patriarchy on women; in fact, it treats patriarchy as the foundation of the nation, and uses patriarchal family norms as templates for constructing a multicultural society. In this multicultural, yet patriarchal, nation-building project, the rights of female marriage migrants are more readily violated than those of Korean women because of the perception of foreign women as “easier targets.”

I share Western feminists’ concern about the erosion of gender equality under multiculturalism. However, by introducing the Korean case study, I argue that cultural relativism and pluralism are not the only factors that undermine the principle of gender equality under multiculturalism. In addition, expanding the scope of multiculturalism in the feminist literature concerned with it is necessary, since multiculturalism does not exist exclusively in Western, democratic, pluralist countries. As I noted in the introduction, there has been no consensus between countries - or even within a country - on what multiculturalism means, whether in normative, theoretical or practical terms.

As I have shown in this thesis, a particularly problematic aspect of multiculturalism in policy and design is its nation-building purpose and the resultant gendered implications. As has been the case throughout South Korea’s history, the government’s nation-building project is patriarchal in nature, and this is no less true of its brand of multiculturalism. Female marriage migrants are expected to take on passive roles as symbols of traditional feminine domesticity within an idealized Korean family and culture, and to become reproducers of the nation. The Korean government embraces female marriage migrants because they are seen as “valuable resources” for its nation, yet relegates them to an inferior position within that nation. Thus in mobilizing female marriage migrants for nation-building, no room exists for gender equality. My study therefore supports feminist theories of nationhood and the ways in which gendered roles are central to the nation-building process.

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<sup>3</sup> Kyung-Koo Han, “The Archaeology of the Ethnically Homogeneous Nation-State and Multiculturalism in Korea,” *Korea Journal* 47, no. 4 (2007): 11.



Furthermore, the problem of discrimination against, and abuse of, female marriage migrants in their own households is used by the Korean government as a justification for its intervention in the private sphere of multicultural families. This reconfirms the feminist insight that discourses of power and hierarchical relationships (often framed as a valued part of a given group's culture), rather than romance and intimacy, prescribe and determine the private sphere. My study, then, contributes to feminist literature on multiculturalism by highlighting the oppressive aspects of the private sphere caused by the perceived importance of nation-building, and the way in which nation-building is enacted in the private sphere. In other words, I have argued that female marriage migrants are oppressed in their own households, not only because of family hierarchy, but also because of government intervention for public and national interest.

In short, the feminist literature on multiculturalism has focused on the lives of immigrant women in liberal Western democracies, oppressed by the retention of patriarchy brought from their countries of origin. However, my study has focused on an oppression of women who have entered to a dominant (Korean) culture, and argued that they are oppressed due to a patriarchal society and nation-building based on patriarchy.

I wish to reiterate the main points of my study for the feminist literature of multiculturalism: first, feminist scholars who write on multiculturalism need to expand their scope of analysis to include assimilationist examples and their gendered implications for women, since no multicultural country is free from such aspects. Secondly, the feminist literature of multiculturalism needs to expand its focus on the existence of patriarchy, not only within minority groups, but within the dominant culture of multicultural countries, and its impacts on immigrant women. Looking at patriarchy within the dominant culture becomes even more important when taking account of Song's insight (introduced in Chapter Two) that patriarchy does not exist solely within minority groups themselves, but strengthens as it interacts with patriarchy present in the society more broadly. In order to provide a nuanced feminist critique of multiculturalism, scholars must take into account societies with strongly assimilationist aspirations, as I have done with my account of the impact of patriarchy upon female marriage migrants in Korea.

## Appendix 1. List of Interviewees

	Organization	Number of interviewee(s)	Name (Position)
MFSCs	South Gyeongsang Provincial Multicultural Family Support Center	2	Lee, Hyeon-hee (Team Leader) Anonymous
	Haman-gun Multicultural Family Support Center	2	Anonymous
	Namhae-gun Multicultural Family Support Center	1	Anonymous
NGOs	Migrant World TV	1	Soe Moe Thu (Producer/Reporter)
	Asian Women's Community/ Incheon Women's Hotline	1	Kim, Seongmikyong (President)
	Changwon Migrant Center (in Sungsan Community Social Welfare Center)	1	Anonymous
	Changwon Women's Hotline	2	Anonymous
	Gyeongnam Migrant Community Service Center	1	Anonymous

## Appendix 2. List of Interview Questions

1. Please explain generally about the work system of MFSCs (regarding funding, the delivery route of the programs and services and the relationships with the city council, the provisional office, the central government and the local NGOs). Or, for interviewees from NGOs, please explain about your organization and work in relation to foreign residents (especially female marriage-based immigrants).
2. Please explain the main characteristics of the local environments in which the MFSC or your organization is based.

3. What are the current issues surrounding foreign residents in general, and international marriages and multicultural families in particular? What are the reasons for the conflicts within multicultural families?
4. What are the purposes of the policies that are designed for marriage-based immigrants and multicultural families?
5. Have the policies been effective in achieving the purposes? Do you agree with the intentional outcomes of the policies and the way they have been implemented? Why? Why not?
6. What are the issues or difficulties in the course of the implementation of the policies? And what are the criteria for an evaluation of the policies?
7. Are there any similarities or differences between female marriage-based immigrants and Korean women in terms of difficulties they face in their own households?
8. How are the policies likely to be transformed or should they be transformed in the near future?

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